

# The Psalms in Worship

A SERIES OF CONVENTION PAPERS BEARING  
UPON THE PLACE OF THE PSALMS IN  
THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH

EDITED BY

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## PREFACE

UNDER the direction of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church of North America two conventions were held in the autumn of 1905, the first in Pittsburgh and the second in Chicago, to promote the claims of the Psalms in the field of worship. The material of the present volume consists of the papers read at what were large and representative gatherings. Inasmuch as the same list of subjects was adopted for both meetings, each theme has two treatments. For the most part these related papers are mutually supplemental.

The volume covers the ground indicated by its title. Building upon the Scriptural principle of divine appointment as set forth in the Westminster Standards, it contains a comprehensive statement of the reasons for the exclusive use in worship of the Bible Psalms. Definitely argumentative discussions of a doctrinal and critical kind are in the forefront. Others of broader type succeed. These latter range along historical, literary, and practical lines, and in their own way make effective contribution to the strength of the position maintained.

In providing for the publication of these convention addresses the General Assembly had more in mind than a denominational interest. There was the further purpose to submit them to the serious consideration of the Christian Church at large. The Psalter, composed under the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, is the common possession of the whole family of God, its ordained manual of praise. It is the oldest hymn-book in existence, having a connected record through thousands of years down to our own times, and it is consecrated forever as having been the hymnary of our Saviour and of the Apostolic Church. In the light of its age-long history, of its rich poetry, of its unsectarian, catholic character, of its freedom from error, of its well-proportioned thought, of its theological depth and spiritual quality, of its wealth of evangelical matter, of its supremacy in the utterance of

devotion and religious experience, and of the unexampled strains in which it celebrates the glories of God, there is ample occasion for the plea that the Churches of Christ recognize in the Psalter their heritage of sacred song, as against a human hymnody with its necessary imperfections.

That He Who "inhabits the praises of Israel" may be pleased to make use of this volume in restoring the Psalms to their true place in the hearts and on the lips of Christian believers is the prayer of the Assembly's Convention Committee.

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JOHN A. HENDERSON,  
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# THE PSALMS IN WORSHIP

## THE IDEA OF WORSHIP

BY THE REV. W. H. McMILLAN, D. D., LL. D., ALLEGHENY, PA.

**W**ORSHIP is right conceptions of the character and works of God suitably expressed. It is seeing Him, and expressing our thoughts and feelings concerning Him. It is an act of the soul. There are forms of expression used in worship, but forms and words and attitudes are not in themselves worship. That is essentially an act of the soul. We are called upon to pour out our hearts to the Lord. God is a spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. The most reverent genuflections, the divinest strains of music, and the most devotional words are nothing and worse than nothing unless the soul of the worshiper is going out to God in them.

Worship is conditioned upon our acceptance with God. An enemy of God cannot be a true worshiper of Him. Worship is an act of devotion presented to God in His presence, and addressed to Him personally. That cannot be until the one who would worship has been accepted in the divine presence. He must know the way to the throne of grace. There is but one way, and Christ is that way. There is but one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. We must come by the way of the Cross when we approach God to worship Him. It is only the children of God who can offer true worship in the Father's presence, for only they know the way thither. Worship is an individual approach to God. There can be no human intermediary in that great moment when a soul comes into the presence of God to present its worship. Then the worshiper



depopulates the globe. He is alone with God. Then we look into His face and speak to Him and hear Him speaking to us. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him," and it is about that secret that we speak to Him when we are alone in His presence.

Worship is an intelligent act. It is what we think about God that prompts it. Thought sweeps the whole field of knowledge concerning God, and from it all gathers material for worship. In Him are seen all power and majesty and dominion. Out into His infinite domain thought travels fast and far. Our solar system, with all its planets, and moons, and rings, we find, after all, to be but a mere speck in the immeasurable reaches of the kingdom of God. With souls awed and almost bewildered by the evidence of the infinite power and dominion of our King we bow and adore. We, in our conscious littleness, worship Him Who "hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance."

In Him we see also the attribute of infinite wisdom. Our minds struggle even with little things. There are numberless questions confronting us of which we can only say, who by searching can find them out? Newton was right when he saw himself as one standing on the shore picking up a few pebbles for examination, while the vast ocean lay all unexplored and unexplorable before him. Our intellectual sight is dazed and blinded by the floods of light that fall on us from every quarter revealing the boundless domain of truth; but in it all and maker of it all we see God Who is *The Truth*. He knoweth all things. With Him there is no mystery. All is naked and open to His eyes. His mind holds in the grasp of His limitless intelligence all facts, all laws, and all relations. He dwelleth in the light, and in Him is no darkness at all. We, blind concerning many things, and short-sighted at best, come to the Infinite Light to worship. There is nothing that satisfies the heart that is hunger-

ing to know like coming to the All-Knowing One and pouring itself out to Him in worship.

And we who are guilty by nature and lost under sin find reasons for adoring, eager, and soulful worship in contemplating the mercy of God in Christ. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Surely the Scriptures write the truth when they declare that the souls are dead which do not worship Him for that. "His mercy flows an endless stream, to all eternity the same." Like His love, which it expresses, it is without height, depth, length, or breadth. Sin abounds, but grace has much more abounded. The iniquities of men have risen up above them as a cloud, and a thick cloud, and a burden too heavy for them to bear, and yet the mercy of our God in Christ overtops that mountain pile of human guilt by an unmeasured reach.

When one has seen all his dark record canceled by the atoning blood of the Son of God, he is ready to sing with a bounding heart,

"Hallelujah! praise Jehovah.  
O my soul, Jehovah praise.  
While I live I'll praise Jehovah,  
To my God sing all my days."

Another subject of the believer's songs of praise is the goodness and love of God. Paul is the most logical writer of the New Testament. He gives us the profoundest reasoning of them all. Yet we find him often breaking off in the middle of a syllogism to shout his gladness in view of the goodness and love of God in His unspeakable gift of Christ. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him," is one of the gusts of gladness which burst from his great soul in contemplating the love of his Lord. While he mused on these things the fire burned; his soul was made to flame with affection for his gracious and blessed Redeemer, and his lips opened in songs of devotion, while his life moved out, under the divine impulse, into

the most heroic paths of service rendered to his Master. All the recorded acts of worship of the people of God throb with intensest devotion to Him Who loved them and gave Himself for them. The reasons for worship are so boundless and so constant that the people of God feel the fires of devotion ever burning in their hearts, unless the cold floods of worldly influence have drowned the sacred flame. In the temple of God of old the fires on the altar were never allowed to go out. So on the heart-altar of the child of God the fire never goes out, and never burns low save when he has turned his face away from the Lord and forgotten for the time what the Lord is, and what He has done for him.

These being some of the reasons for worship which kindle the soul of a child of God, the question arises, how can he give suitable expression to Him of all that is in his heart? His soul is moved with the spirit of worship. How can he tell it out? It is evident that every act of a child of God which is intended to express to Him His child's appreciation of His character and works is an act of worship, since every such act shows forth the praises of God and promotes His honor and glory. Preaching the gospel is an act of worship, because it proclaims what God is and what He is able and willing to do for lost men. Prayer is an act of worship, because it acknowledges the sin and helplessness of men, and the sovereign grace and goodness of God as the bountiful supply of all human need. Giving of our substance to God is an act of worship, because it is making a grateful return for His gifts to us as the head of the kingdom of grace in the world. Reading the Word is an act of worship, because it is receiving from God His revealed messages of truth to make us wise unto eternal life. But those acts done for God which are usually counted most distinctly acts of worship are rendering to Him our songs of praise. It is not always true that actions speak louder than words. There are some things in us so deep and vital that actions cannot express them at all. Intelligent speech is the glory of man, and this great power is to be used in celebrating the praises of Him Who has called us out of

darkness into His marvelous light. The Old Testament prophets are frequently called seers, the men who saw. Every true Christian is a seer. He has seen the invisible, and heard things not written down in any of the philosophies of men. He has become acquainted in some measure with God, and there are great thoughts surging through his mind, and tidal waves of religious emotion swelling within him. He must speak the praises of his Lord. But he is there met by a difficulty. His words fail him. His words cannot put into expression all, or the half, of what is in his heart to say to God. His thoughts are too big for utterance. He is conscious of the need of divine aid to speak in sufficient and right terms the great themes of his worship. It is then that he turns with deepest satisfaction to the songs which the Spirit of God has written for the people of God as the expression of their devotion to Him. There the great things of God are unfolded as only the divine penman can unfold them, and there the petitions which we need to offer, and are allowed to offer, to God with assurance of being heard are framed for us. We are told that the Spirit makes intercession for the saints with groanings which cannot be uttered. This is nowhere more true than when the believer attempts to tell God what is in his heart of love, adoration, and trust. We began with the thought that worship is right conceptions of the character and works of God suitably expressed. We find, do we not, that such conceptions are taught and adequately expressed in the Psalms of the Bible as they cannot be in any words which the pens of uninspired men have written.

## THE IDEA OF WORSHIP

BY THE REV. JOHN M. ROSS, RIVERSIDE, CAL.

“I HAVE seen Thee,” says Lord Bacon, “in Thy works, I have sought Thee in Thy providences, but I have found Thee in Thy temples.” In His worship men come close to God. The offering of spiritual service to God in the celebration of His praise is one of the highest, noblest employments in which man can engage, the supreme reach of the soul. It is the first thing that He asks of His Church. It is not to be forgotten that an aim of the Church is to seek the salvation of those outside the kingdom, and the comfort, instruction, and edification of believers; that it is a school for the training of Christ’s disciples, a home for God’s family, an organization for aggressive work, a force for righteousness transforming whatsoever it touches, conserving the dearest interests of humanity. But likewise let it never be forgotten that primarily and distinctively and preëminently the Church is an organization for worship. If there were no reflex influence on ourselves, if there were no longer need of spiritual culture, if there were no longer need of Christianity as a redeeming agency, the obligations of Christian worship would still continue, and will forever continue.

This follows from the very nature of God. A Being so exalted, “infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth,” calls out the homage and adoration of the renewed soul. When one gets the vision of Jehovah, with the French preacher at the bier of his king he exclaims: “God only is great!” He bows in worship. The divine character invites it. Man is predisposed to render it. God is pleased to receive it.

Religion has its outlook on the human side. The practical James speaks of it as a visiting of the fatherless and widows in their affliction and keeping oneself unspotted from the world. It has its Godward aspect also, which manifests itself in adoration and homage. Indeed worship is the soul of religion, the pulsations of the inner life, the breathings of the spirit after God. The religious faculty must find expression. If it is repressed it withers, and man does not come to his best. One of the propositions laid down by modern psychology is that there must be an expression in some active way of every bodily and mental state. Nothing can come to its full significance without expression. Herein lies the philosophical basis of worship.

The root idea appears in the etymology and use of the word—an ascribing of worth to God. In the Scriptural history of worship it is seen that the essential force of the term is maintained and the central idea indicated in the acknowledgment of God's supremacy and rights and in man's desire to honor Him. It showed itself in the faith of Abel, the obedience of Abraham, the homage of Isaiah, the adoration of David, the love of John, the consecration of Paul. From such heart-shrines the incense of devotion has risen during the ages, as men have ascribed worth to God in the manner that He has required and in the way that He has appointed, describing that worth in terms most fitting and honoring. The recognition of the renewed soul's relation to God is religion. As one tells us, "it is the re-binding [re-ligo] of the soul to its divine Creator; and the realization and manifestation of this relation are worship. In worship there are two parts or elements—adoration and manifestation, an essence and a form, a service of the heart and an appropriate external expression." Reverently does man stand before God to render it. The proper attitude is that of a soul uncovered before Him.

That which makes man's worship so rich is the strain of redemption underlying it. In the worship of the angels there are praise and thanksgiving without petition or supplication. There are in it no redemptive features. But man's worship reaches

God only through the Redeemer. Even the adoration of redeemed souls in heaven has in it the strain of redemption: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests." Around the throne throughout the ages to come there will be a richer and deeper tone and a sublimity in man's worship that can never be reached by that of the angels.

The worship of God has its uses. It is worth while. It has "an ultimate and a proximate end." The ultimate end is the glory of God, the proximate is the good of man. But only as the ultimate end is kept in view is the proximate secured in the measure that is to be desired. Thus when He is truly worshiped God is glorified and man is helped. "We can add nothing to God's happiness or greatness, but we can please Him with our adoration, and we can promote His glory and magnify His honor before the intelligences of earth and heaven. And by the contemplation of God's perfections, and by communion with Him, we get nearer to Him, see more of Him, comprehend Him better, trust Him more implicitly, and love Him more fervently. And then we are made richer in our heart's desires, for He has said to no one, 'Seek ye My face,' in vain. Worship is truly no empty form or mere routine performance. It is instinct with life, high and noble life." Let God be exalted in our thoughts, this Being of infinite perfections worshiped, and the tendency is for us to become like Him. Men do become like that which they love, adore, worship. There is profound philosophy in the Apostle's statement, "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Men are as their conception of God is, and according to the character of the worship they render Him. If a man does not worship there is wanting in his life the most potent factor in human development. What a tremendous influence the Church's worship has had in the life of individuals and the history of the race! The place of nations in

the scale of civilization has been determined by their worship. It has been the mightiest educative influence known among men, turning their attention to the higher values of life, bringing before their minds the highest of truths, bringing them into touch with the Infinite. It has emphasized the teachings of Christianity and conserved the faith of Christ far better than controversial statement or written creed. During the ages it has been "for a memorial before the Most High, for a testimony before the world, and for the nourishment and consolation of the body of Christ on earth." It has been God's agency for man's higher interests and man's way of honoring God.

Such being the influence of the Church's worship and its far-reaching results, what an argument we have as to the reasonableness of insisting that the original divinely constituted and prescribed elements of it should all be carefully safe-guarded, lest any one of them should be vitiated, atrophied, or impaired.

The Psalter is a book of worship by means of which man may express in fitting terms his homage and adoration. It gives us the completest view of God which we, in our present limitations, are capable of receiving. "Canst thou by searching find out God?" We can only know Him as He reveals Himself. Herein lies the weakness of an uninspired hymnology; it cannot give us a complete view of God. Man cannot transcribe on canvas the glory of a summer sunset. Man cannot adequately describe God's majestic works. He stands in awe before a Niagara, but can give no adequate description of it. How much less can man describe the unseen God in the greatness of His being and the glory of His perfections. Yet in His praise man is to recount God's perfections and exalt Him in His attributes. God only can give man words by means of which in any adequate sense he can do this. To the end that he may do so God has prepared and given to His Church the Psalter. The astronomer comes back from the survey of the heavens and reverently exclaims: "I have been thinking God's thoughts after Him." Only as we think over God's thoughts of Himself can we know



that we are in the pathway of truth and are expressing that which is fitting and acceptable in His praise.

It is a misconception of worship, especially the praise feature of it, to regard it as chiefly subjective. When it is so regarded the tendency is for the praise service to degenerate into a mere song service, with the idea uppermost of making the services bright and attractive and entertaining. Thus the true idea of worship is obscured oftentimes, not only by the subject matter offered, but by forgetfulness of the real end and purpose of the praise service. "In fact," as one tells us, "in the great mass of modern hymnology there is little or nothing of the element of praise. There are tender appeals to human emotions and affections. There are songs which stir the sensibilities more quickly than the majestic and incomparable songs of the Word of God. But how little a grain of praise they offer to Him Whom they profess to worship. The tendency of all uninspired hymnology is subjective, manward, rather than Godward." The true conception of praise is that it is objective. It is not meant to terminate on ourselves or others, but on God. It is to celebrate the greatness of His name as He is revealed in His Word and works. The fixing of our thoughts chiefly on ourselves, the recounting of our frames and states and feelings, though in never so beautiful sentiment and inspiring song, is not praise. It is lacking in the real idea of worship. In our praise our thoughts and emotions are to go out to God and reverently rest on Him. Herein lies the superiority of the Psalms as a manual of praise. They draw our thoughts and emotions and feelings out to Him and mass them upon Him. When the Psalms do lay hold of our subjective states they do not leave us there, but lead us out to God and center our thought on Him as the One with Whom we have to do.

It is a misconception of the praise service to regard it chiefly for impression rather than for expression. The praise service is not chiefly for the purpose of impressing truth upon ourselves or others, but its purpose is to express unto God the glory due to His

name. The singing of the gospel, helpful though it may be in its place, is not of the nature of praise, for the gospel is addressed to man, not to God. In seeking to make an impression upon men the singing of the gospel may be usurping the place of that which is due unto God. That which terminates on ourselves or others may be a means of grace, but only that which terminates on God is praise. The praise service is not meant chiefly for instruction, though it instructs; is not meant chiefly to stir spiritual emotions, though it does so; is not meant merely to make the services more attractive, though it does so; is not meant to terminate on ourselves, but on the great God. It is to magnify Him. Sermon and sacrament may be for the impressing of truth, but praise is the expressing unto God that which is His due. Let Him not be robbed of it. Such a conception of praise will spiritualize our worship, give God that which is owing Him, and make for a strong, virile Christianity, where the thought is centered not on ourselves but upon the great God, infinite in His perfections, glorious in His attributes. "I will exalt Thee, O my God." This is the essence of praise; this is the idea of worship.

## THE SCRIPTURAL LAW OF WORSHIP

BY THE REV. WILLIAM H. VINCENT, D. D., ALLEGHENY, PA.

**T**HE worship of a Supreme Being seems to be a universal instinct, and, because of the sovereignty, majesty, and holiness of the Object of worship, must be surrounded by such safeguards, restrictions, and sanctities as will preserve the divine honor and secure the acceptance of the worshiper and his worship.

It is of the utmost importance that every worshiper of God shall have a definite and clear understanding of what are the means and manner of worship, that it may be acceptable unto God with Whom we have to do. Without this knowledge the great mass of the world's population has for ages, like the Athenians, worshiped unknown gods. Rather than incur the wrath of heaven by a form of worship that is dishonoring and displeasing to God we should, instead of allowing ourselves ignorantly to worship, seek some divine message declaring what the mind of the Lord is, and follow it. Our worship rendered to God is of the utmost importance. It is rendered to the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth Who created us, Who preserves us, Who saves us, and Who is at last to judge us. Because He is the sovereign Lord of all, because He is infinitely high and holy, and has a watchful care over His worship that it be kept pure and holy, we are to be very watchful and conscientious that our worship be rendered according to the divine appointment.

Many branches of the Protestant Church have been all at sea on this important matter, and we need to have careful thought and carefully digested and formulated regulations on the matter of worship drawn from the Word of God, lest like the Roman

Catholic Church in all its history we leave an open door for the introduction of all manner of idol-worship and the inventions of men, until the purity and simplicity of the worship of God, as set forth in the Scriptures, are superseded and supplanted by the mummeries and man-made devices which corrupt and degrade our attempted approaches to God.

This subject touches some of the highest, holiest, and deepest doctrines of our religion. It is founded on the sovereignty, majesty, and holiness of God. Is God the sovereign Lord of all? Is His revealed will to be accepted as the infallible guide of human conduct? Has He a right to rule in His own house? Has He a right to prescribe the way by which He may be approached and worshiped? If these questions are to be answered in the affirmative, then His rights in these matters are exclusive. No man or potentate, however exalted, nor any number of men, as a Church council, can arrogate to themselves the right to dictate or prescribe the manner by which God is to be worshiped. God Himself must decide in what way He will be approached. He alone can lay down the ordinances and methods by which He may be acceptably worshiped. God's sovereign right covers the whole ground, and does not leave any margin on which the intrusion of human inventions can get a footing.

The Roman Catholic Church opens a wide door for all manner of ceremonies and inventions when it gives standing in its worship to anything not contrary to the Word of God. For all its legion of inventions it claims the authority of some Council of the Church, which, though perhaps unheard-of otherwise in history, answers as a convenient scapegoat on which to lay the sin.

The Lutheran and Anglican Churches claim a place for rites and services which may be approved by the Church, so long as they are not forbidden by the Scriptures. The Reformed Churches, especially those of the Puritan family of Holland and England and the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland and Ireland with their descendants, take much higher ground and claim that

the line is to be drawn excluding everything which does not have plain divine appointment. In other words that which is not commanded is forbidden. The faith of these Churches is set forth in the Catechisms, Larger and Shorter, and the Confession of Faith of the Westminster Assembly.

Question 51 of the Shorter Catechism, on what is forbidden in the Second Commandment, states: "The Second Commandment forbiddeth the worshiping of God by images or any other way not appointed in His Word." The Larger Catechism, at Question 109, says in part: "The sins forbidden in the Second Commandment are all devising, counseling, commanding, using, and anywise approving any religious worship not instituted by God Himself . . . all superstitious devices corrupting the worship of God, adding to it or taking from it." The Confession of Faith, Chap. xxi., Sec. 1, says: "The acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will that He may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures."

That these statements of doctrine are in accord with the uniform teaching of the Scriptures is evident from the following: *First*. In the institution of worship, both in the Old and in the New Testament dispensations, what God appoints alone can stand; all else is excluded. This would be expected from the fact that the great God we worship is the sovereign Lord of all. The laws He lays down for His subjects are not to be bandied about according to the caprice or sinfulness of man. God is Lord of His own house. It cannot have two lords or masters. "I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory will I not give to another." The sovereignty, majesty, and holiness of God require that in all matters pertaining to our approach to Him in holy worship it is His to command and ours to obey.

"Ours not to make reply,  
Ours not to question why."

Accordingly we find in all the Scriptures careful provision made that the worship of God may be according to His own appointment, and surrounded with such safeguards and sanctities as shall preserve it unsullied and inviolate from the devices of man. Whence came the laws concerning sacrifices, concerning the Sabbath, concerning circumcision, concerning the feasts of the Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, and concerning the Great Day of Atonement, and many more? Were they not by divine appointment only? In the structure of the tabernacle and its worship all matters were minutely laid down, and could not be altered. When God gave these commandments to Moses, at His august presence Mount Sinai was filled with thunders and lightnings and clouds and fire and smoke, and that which He commanded left no room for additions or embellishments by Moses or any artificer however skilled. That which was appointed was to stand, and all else was forbidden. When all the minute directions concerning the tabernacle and its appointments in the Book of Exodus were laid down, it was accompanied by the divine decree (xxv. 40), "And look that thou make them after their pattern which was showed thee in the mount."

The tabernacle, with all its materials and utensils, may pass away, together with the temple whose services were likewise ordered of the Lord, but the principle that God reserves to Himself the right to appoint the ordinances and manner of His own worship stands forever. Every ordinance of God's house must show its divine appointment. "See that thou make it according to the pattern which was showed thee." Not only was the order of the tabernacle and the temple service thus provided for, but in later years when the temple service was restored by King Hezekiah its sacrifices, the Passover, and other ordinances, together with the praise service, were reestablished according to the commandment of the Lord. 2 Chron. xxix. 30 says, "Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they

bowed their heads and worshiped." That all this was done by the king under divine authority is plainly stated in verse 25: "For so was the commandment of the Lord by His prophets."

In the order established by our Lord and the inspired Apostles in the New Testament Church the ordinances of the reading and preaching of the Word, prayer, the singing of inspired songs, the observance of the Sabbath, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, are all provided by the great King and Head of the Church. Our Lord severely condemns the Pharisees, who by their traditions and inventions laid heavy burdens upon men's shoulders. When extortion and unholy traffic had thrust themselves into the temple, our Lord in His zeal for His holy house drove therefrom with a whip the money-changers and extortionate traders. He guards the purity of His house and worship that unholy devices may not dwell therein.

Again when He speaks of the Pharisees making void the ordinances of God by their traditions, He says, "In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." His last commission refers not only to the extension of His Church, but to the purity of the doctrine and worship of His Church: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." They were to teach, not what things are not forbidden, but "all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

The people of Israel lived in the midst of heathen and idolatrous nations, and, lest they should lose their exalted heritage of the truth of God and the purity of their religious life and worship, they were enjoined from familiar intercourse and entangling alliances with the heathen around about. The Church of God to-day is in the same peril. Just as it begins to depart from the divine order it opens the door to all manner of abuses and corruptions in God's worship. God would guard His sacred

oracles still, unto the end of time, by prescribing for His Church the ordinances of worship. He would not have the ark of God suffer an unseemly touch, nor have strange fire come upon His altar. The sacredness of this trust of holy laws and ordinances is impressed upon us in Deut. iv. 1, 2: "Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments which I teach you, for to do them. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." This embraces more than are commonly known as moral precepts, for verses 13 to 19 particularly guard the people against profaning and corrupting God's worship, closing with the words, "Lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them." Thus by the most minute regulations the great King and Head of the Church has guarded His holy ordinances of worship, that the conceit and devices of man may not add thereto or diminish therefrom.

*Second.* It is a general principle in the interpretation of law that when something is commanded, whatever is opposed thereto is forbidden. When God commands, "Thou shalt do no murder," He forbids any practices or habits which endanger our lives or the lives of others. When He commands, "Thou shalt not steal," He lays upon us the obligation to be engaged in some useful, honorable employment, that we may honestly obtain the things we need. When He commands, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve," He prohibits the giving of any kind of worship to any other. The worship of the sun, the moon, the stars, the Virgin Mary, the Apostles, or any of the saints, is all cast out by one sweep of the divine hand. The commandment, "Worship God," covers the whole ground, and hence the giving of worship to any other is forbidden.

When He commands the singing of inspired songs in His praise, that command covers the whole ground, and any other



book of praise has no foundation in the Word of God. But some one insists that, while the use of the Psalms of the Bible is proper, sacred songs written by uninspired men may be used, since they are nowhere forbidden. That is, however, the old plea of the Roman Catholic, that things not contrary to the Word of God may be introduced. On the same principle the worship of the Virgin Mary, confession to the priest, paying money to get friends out of purgatory, the sale of indulgences to commit sin, and the whole legion of such absurdities and heresies find an open door, and may come in to corrupt and degrade the Church of God. This old plea that things not forbidden may be introduced into the worship of the Church is a Trojan horse in which all manner of corruptions and abominations can clandestinely creep into the very holy of holies of the worship of the Church. It was said that the Rev. John Newton was a great lover of cats. Once he possessed a mother cat and a kitten. In the kindness of his heart, and to prevent the too frequent interruption of his studies by waiting on the cats, he had two holes cut in the door of his house, one for the old cat, and a smaller one for the kitten. It had not occurred to the good man that the hole that would admit the larger cat would admit also the kitten, indeed would admit not only two cats but any number of cats. When you have made an opening in the door of God's house large enough to admit songs of praise which God has not authorized, that same hole will admit the worship of the Virgin Mary, prayers to St. Peter, confession to the priest, holy water, kissing the pope's toe, and the whole brood of pollutions and monstrosities from which the Church escaped in the tremendous revolution and reformation of the sixteenth century. The great principle that only what is commanded has a place in the worship of God was one of the cornerstones of the Reformation; without it the great battle of Protestantism against Romanism could never have been fought out and won. In asserting this doctrine we are simply calling the Church back to one of the great attainments of the Reformation, when purity of worship and the

inspired songs of God's Word had the right of way in all the Reformed Churches.

*Third.* God has revealed by startling judgments His displeasure when the divine rule is violated. When Nadab and Abihu appeared before the Lord to offer incense (Lev. x.), they took their censers and put strange fire therein to offer before the Lord. God's appointment was that the fire should be taken from off His own altar, and it was therefore holy; but instead they used fire of their own kindling. The fire which they used would perhaps burn as brightly and consume the incense just as well, and doubtless many would say "it is just as good": but it lacked this peculiar mark of sanctity—it was not of God's appointment; it was not divine fire. As a mighty judgment, fire from heaven, like a blazing bolt of lightning, smote them, and they died before the Lord. They had intruded a merely human device into holy things, and thus supplanted and superseded the sacred divine order, and they died for their sin. When King Uzziah had his heart lifted up with pride and conceit, he appeared in the temple with a censer to burn incense before the Lord. The attendant priests were horrified, and fourscore of them in their flowing robes rushed after him and cried unto him, "It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed." But the hot-headed king persisted, and God smote him upon his forehead with a loathsome leprosy, "and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him." For any one, even for a king, to intrude himself was an offense to God, and God put a mark upon him as manifest as the mark of Cain. When those priests with strange fire died before the Lord, the Lord said, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me, and before all the people I will be glorified." Some one may say, O well, the matter cannot be regarded so strictly now, or we would see such judgments every day. But because those who offend God do not reap the punishment at once is no proof that

God has ceased to hold men to an account for intruding upon His sacred appointments and offering strange fire. One judgment of this kind hangs out the red light of warning for all time. Because all liars are not struck dead for their prevarications, as were Ananias and Sapphira, it is no indication that God has ceased to hate lying. One swift, terrible judgment like that is sufficient for all time. One startling manifestation of God's displeasure like that upon Nadab and Abihu rings in our ears down through the ages the message, Beware of intruding human devices into the sacred things of God; beware of substituting any invention of man, however pleasing, for the simple sacred order of God's appointments. "In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

Thus the simple divine order of things appointed becomes the inviolable law to be observed in the worship of God for all time. Would we not count it a great sacrilege and scandal if men would substitute something else for the bread and wine in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which God has appointed? Would we not count it a profanation of God's ordinance of Baptism if men would set about to substitute some other liquid for the pure water which God has appointed? Is it not the same principle when men intrude any other compositions or praise books into divine worship to supplant God's book and substitute instead the invention of man?

But some may say: Can we not versify and sing other portions of the Word, as the Gospels, and thus sing the gospel? To this it may be said: (1) God's provision is to preach the gospel to the world, not to sing it; (2) The Gospels are not lyrical, and were never intended for the praise service of the house of God; (3) There is but one book which God has labeled the "Book of Praise" either in the Old or New Testament Church, and that book is the appointed and authorized Book of Psalms.

The crucial point which we emphasize in this discussion is: What has the divine appointment? By that standard every book of praise must stand or fall. That which has not the divine

appointment has no standing in God's house. The Book of Psalms not only has the seal of inspiration, but it has also the clear and unmistakable appointment of God. Hence it is the book of praise for the Church of God in every age and in every land. As it has songs which relate not only to the past and present of the Church, but to the Church in the millennial age, and since the spirit of inspiration is withdrawn from the Church, the Book of Psalms is designed to continue as the manual of praise in the Church until the end of time.

## THE SCRIPTURAL LAW OF WORSHIP

BY THE REV. WILLIAM S. McCLURE, D. D., XENIA, OHIO

**S**PIRITUAL service rendered to God by a sentient being is worship. For such service from man God has made ample provision in that He has endowed him with a reasonable soul and furnished him with matter and means for worship. That God, Who alone is worthy of worship, should give to man, from whom a worthy worship is due, a law of worship is an antecedent probability. That this law should be found in the Scriptures, which purport to be the Word of God, His will become concrete and audible, addressed to man whose worship God claims and calls for, is not a matter of conjecture, but of certitude. "The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him."

Law which emanates from the nature of God is moral-natural law, inflexible and unchanging as the nature of God Himself, Who has said, "I change not." This is the law which binds us to the worship of God, because of what God is, and because of what we are. It is stated thus by the Holy Ghost, "He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him." Moral-positive law takes its rise in the will of God. Its binding force is subject to His will. It is by this law that the matter and means, the method and manner, of acceptable worship are determined. This is the law of worship which lies within the scope of our enquiry, with respect to which there can be but one source of authority, viz., the revealed will of God, and but one rule of action, viz., a divine warrant.

With respect therefore to the Scriptural law of worship, I

submit the following proposition, viz.: I. Whatsoever is not commanded in the Scriptures is forbidden. II. The Bible Psalter alone is commanded to be used in the praise service in the worship of God. III. Therefore all matter of praise besides the Bible Psalter is by the Scriptural law of worship forbidden to be used in the praise service in the worship of God.

MAJOR PREMISE

*Whatsoever is not commanded is forbidden.*

God's commands are either explicit, clearly stated, or they are implicit, implied as a logical, necessary inference from authoritative example, such as that of Christ or His Apostles. The Westminster divines exempt from the operation of this law "some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence." Concerning this deliverance let us note, 1st: These "circumstances" are neither in, nor are they a part of, the worship of God, but only "concern" the worship of God. 2nd: They are such as "are common to human actions and societies," that is, the time and place of meeting, how often and how long, whether in a house or tent or barn or forest or street, whether morning, noon, or night, etc. These are "circumstances concerning the worship of God such as are common to human actions and societies." 3rd: "The circumstances concerning the worship of God to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence" are to be ordered "according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed" (cf. Westminster Confession of Faith, Chap. i., Sec. 6).

That God may be worshiped in any way not forbidden in the Scriptures is the doctrine held by Romanists and Prelatists, and in the Scriptures they include the Apocrypha. Excepting the Apocrypha, this is the doctrine likewise of the Lutherans, the Protestant Episcopalians, and certain of their Presbyterian imitators. In her 20th Article the Church of England claims the

right "to decree rites and ceremonies," with this limitation only, that "it is not lawful for the Church to order anything that is contrary to God's written Word"; that is, anything is legitimate in the worship of God which is not expressly forbidden in the Scriptures. What larger license can rationalism and ritualism in religion ask than this?

Positive divine prescription was accepted as the only warrant in matters of faith and worship by John Knox, John Owen, John Calvin, the Free Kirk of Scotland, the Puritan martyrs, and the Westminster divines. "Discretionary powers exercised by the Church in the assumption that whatsoever is not forbidden is permitted," says Dr. Girardeau, "was the chief fountain from which flowed the gradually increasing tide of corruptions which swept the Latin Church into apostasy from the gospel of God's grace." "So sure as cause produces effect, and history repeats itself in obedience to this law, any Protestant Church which embodies that principle in its creed is destined sooner or later to experience a similar fate." These are the words, likewise, of Dr. John Owen, that prince of English divines: "The principle that the Church has power to institute anything belonging to the worship of God, either as to matter or manner, beyond the circumstances which necessarily attend such ordinances as Christ Himself hath instituted, lies at the bottom of all the horrible superstitions and idolatry, of all the confusion, persecution, blood and war, which have spread themselves over the Christian world." These are the opinions of two great and devout students of the Word of God and of history.

In our endeavor to find an answer to our query, What is the Scriptural law of worship, we are not shut up to the opinions of men, mighty and majestic as they may be. The crucial test of all teachers and tenets is this, viz.: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah viii. 20).

*Ist*: "To the law and to the testimony." What saith Jehovah in His Word with respect to His own worship? (a) Deut. iv.

1, 2. "Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers giveth you. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." (b) Deut. xii. 32. "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." (c) Ex. xxv. 40. Concerning the construction of the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, and its furniture, Jehovah charged Moses, saying: "Look that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount." (d) Matt. xxviii. 20. "Teaching them (said Jesus to His disciples) to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." cf. Rev. xxii. 16-19.

*2nd:* What is God's own interpretation of the Scriptural law of worship as found in His enforcement of that law, examples of which are recorded in the Scriptures? (a) Gen. iv. 3-5. Cain fell under the ban of that law, in that with respect to the matter and the manner of God's worship he set his own will in the stead of God's will. Cain stands forth as the first among rationalists in religion, and as a warning to his race. (b) Lev. x. 1-3. The offering of incense to God with fire "which He commanded them not" was the sin for which Nadab and Abihu were struck dead. (c) Numb. xvi. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were overtaken by the swift indignation of Jehovah simply for using discretionary powers in matters of worship. They usurped functions which belonged only to a certain class, the descendants of Levi through Aaron. Korah was a Levite, but not a son of Aaron. (d) Numb. xx. Moses was excluded from the promised land because he went beyond the command with respect to the rock and water at Kadesh. (e) Other Old Testament examples may be found in 1 Sam. xiii.; 1 Kings xii. 32, 33; 1 Chron. xiii. 7-10; 1 Chron. xv. 11-15; 2 Chron. xxvi. 16-21; 2 Chron. xxviii. 3-5. (f) Acts vii. 37-53. The rejection of Christ



and of His Word as the sole and supreme authority in matters of worship is designated as "resisting the Holy Ghost," the sin on account of which the Jewish Church, state, and national polity were demolished. The Scriptural law of worship, as written in the Scriptures, and as enforced by examples recorded in the Scriptures, is this, viz.: "Whatsoever is not commanded is forbidden."

#### MINOR PREMISE

*The Bible Psalter alone is commanded to be used in the praise service in the worship of God.*

The proofs of this proposition we may be permitted simply to point out, since it takes us into the territory assigned to others. (a) A strong presumptive proof of this proposition is found in the fact that the Bible Psalter was prepared and placed in the Canon of Scripture, among whose Books it has neither a peer nor a rival. Its position is altogether unique. (b) The name by which the Holy Ghost designates the Bible Psalter goes a long ways in establishing our proposition: "*Sepher Tehillim*," "Book of Praises," "Book of Psalms," "Book of Hymns," designed not simply to be read as other Books of the Bible, but to be sung. (c) That the foregoing is a fair inference is established by the fact that over and over again we have the command in Scripture "to sing Psalms." A few examples: 1 Chron. xvi. 9; Ps. xcv. 2; Ps. cxlix. 1; Ps. cv. 2; Col. iii. 16; Eph. v. 19; James v. 13. (d) The title given by the Holy Ghost to David, the author of the major part of the Psalms, viz., "The sweet Psalmist of Israel," as descriptive of his office. He was "the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel." (e) That God appointed the Bible Psalter to be used in the Old Testament Church none perhaps will deny. That God has anywhere or at any time revoked that appointment none can affirm. Therefore if the example of Christ and of His Apostles and of the Post-Apostolic Church can be adduced as sanctioning the use of the Psalms in

the worship of the New Testament Church, then we are forced to the conclusion that it is the will of God that the Bible Psalter be used in the praise service of the New Testament Church. The Jews sing the Psalms unto this day. The "hymn" sung by our Lord and His Apostles at the close of the celebration of the Lord's Supper, the night it was instituted, was beyond the possibility of a doubt a portion of the Hallel, Psalms cxiii.-cxviii. (Matt. xxvi. 30; Mark xiv. 26). In the Gospels and the Acts the "Book of Psalms" is recognized as the praise book of the Church.

#### THE CONCLUSION

*Therefore, in the praise service, in the worship of God, all matter of praise besides the Bible Psalter is forbidden by the Scriptural law of worship.*

According to this law a lyric, to be eligible to the praise service in the worship of God, must have these two requisites and qualifications, viz., divine authorization and divine inspiration. Paraphrases and poems from other Books of the Bible are excluded by the Scriptural law of worship from the praise service in God's worship for reasons such as these: 1. Other parts of Scripture are equally inspired with the Psalter, but they have no seal of divine appointment for purposes of praise. 2. The song service in the worship of God is designed to praise God, His attributes, His modes of subsistence, and His prerogatives. To sing the gospel as such is not to praise God, for the reason that the gospel is addressed to men, and not to God. All merely human compositions are by the law of worship forbidden to be used in the praise service in the worship of God for the reason that they are neither authorized nor inspired. "The Second Commandment forbiddeth the worshiping of God by images or any other way not appointed in His Word" (Shorter Catechism, Ques. 51). God may not be worshiped in any way "not prescribed in the holy Scriptures" (Confession of Faith, Chap. xxi., Sec. 1). The words of Him "Who is the Head over all things unto the

Church" are these: "In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

Who is he who can say that the testimony of the United Presbyterian Church is not in accord with the Scriptural law of worship when it says: "We declare that it is the will of God that the songs contained in the Book of Psalms be sung in His worship, both public and private, to the end of the world; and in singing God's praise these songs should be employed to the exclusion of the devotional compositions of uninspired men"?

"Whatsoever is not commanded is forbidden." This, the Scriptural law of worship, is the acropolis of the Church's liberties, the palladium of her purity, and her God-given moorage. Let the Protestant Church, in creed or conduct, in profession or practice, depart from this divine principle, and she has weighed her sheet-anchor only to find its flukes sundered and herself adrift on the high seas, a craft without compass or chart or polestar, in the midnight darkness of rationalism and ritualism, with her prow pointing to "Rome" as her probable landing-place.

## THE SINGING OF PRAISE A DUTY

BY PRESIDENT F. M. SPENCER, D. D., STERLING, KAN.

**T**HAT singing praise to God is a duty can be established by a fivefold argument.

*First.* It is taught by the light of nature and reason. Man is made for song. The vocal organs are fashioned for the production of melodious sounds. The voice as a musical instrument is more perfect than any made by man. It is susceptible of finer modulations and more exquisite renderings. These sounds are conveyed to the tympanum of the ear in all their richness and sweetness, and are perceived and interpreted by the mind. It is natural for man to sing, to give expression to his sentiments, his feelings, and his convictions in song. Love is not slow in seizing upon this vehicle for giving expression to her finest and tenderest emotions. Patriotism, too, is not unmindful of this means of arousing the minds of men, stirring them to their depths, and exciting them to deeds of heroism. How natural, then, that the deepest and strongest emotions of the soul, flowing out in gratitude and love, should be expressed in vocal and exultant praise? This argument is strengthened by the fact that service of song is not confined to this life nor to the human race. In the Revelation, chap. xiv., we are told that the one hundred and forty-four thousand sang a new song before the throne; and when the angelic host came down at the birth of Jesus they sang: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

*Second.* It is a commanded duty. It is not necessary to quote more than a tithe of the many express passages commanding us to sing praise to God. A few are given. "Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His

holiness." Ps. xxx. 4. "Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding." Ps. xlvii. 6, 7. "Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands: Sing forth the honor of His name; make His praise glorious." Ps. lxvi. 1, 2. "Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob." Ps. lxxxix. 1. "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before His presence with singing." Ps. c. 1, 2. Many of the one hundred and fifty Psalms begin with the short, terse, expressive, "Praise ye the Lord." Frequently this is followed by a command to sing His praises, as in Ps. cxlix. 1: "Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and His praise in the congregation of saints."

No command is more frequently and emphatically imposed upon God's people in the Old Testament than is the duty of singing praise to God. In the New Testament these commands are renewed and made emphatic. Paul writing to the Colossians (iii. 16) says: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." In Ephesians, v. 18, 19, he says: "Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Language in the form of a command could not insist more clearly and distinctly upon the duty of singing praise to God.

*Third.* This duty is taught by approved examples. The first notable example of this is recorded in Ex. xv. When God had brought Israel out of Egypt, and across the Red Sea in safety, "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord: I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea." Miriam, the prophetess, and the women who followed her answered with the same song: "Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath

triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea." In the days of David we find appointed in the Church singers who were to preside over and lead this part of the public worship. This service must have been in the tabernacle in the time of David. In the time of Solomon it was in the temple. The same service was continued in the time of Ezra: "And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because He is good, for His mercy endureth forever toward Israel."

Our Saviour and His disciples sang an hymn, generally supposed to have been the Hallel, Pss. cxiii.-cxviii., just after the institution of the Lord's Supper. When Paul and Silas were doing mission work at Philippi they were arrested, beaten, cast into prison, thrust into the inner dungeon, and their feet made fast in the stocks. There they prayed and sang praises to God at the midnight hour till the prisoners heard them and God Himself shook the building with an earthquake, opened the doors, and released the prisoners. Thus God has given His seal to the example of those who, in both dispensations, have sung praises to His name.

*Fourth.* Singing His praise glorifies God. If it be true that "man's chief end is to glorify God," then singing praise to Him is a duty. This argument has special reference to the use of inspired songs. Human compositions are largely subjective. The Psalms are largely objective. David said, "I have set the Lord always before me." The Psalms are objective in that from first to last God is set before the mind. His perfections are the theme. His work is the subject. His glory is the end.

The Psalms are an epitome of the whole Bible. In the Second Psalm the Father and Son are presented, and in the Fifty-First, the Holy Spirit. Thus we have the doctrine of the Trinity. In the Psalms God is the Creator and Preserver of all things: "In wisdom hast Thou made them all." "Lord, Thou preservest man and beast."

The Psalms are full of Christ. In the Fortieth Psalm He gives Himself to the work of man's redemption: "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God." In the Twenty-Second Psalm His sufferings are described, and there is given His language upon the Cross: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" In the Sixty-Eighth Psalm we have the glory of His ascension. He it is Who ascends on high leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for men. Christ is the perfect man of the First Psalm, the shepherd of the Twenty-Third, the bridegroom of the Forty-Fifth, the rock of the Fortieth, and the King of Glory of the Twenty-Fourth. There are no other compositions which in such a transcendent way exhibit the divine perfections, and since God knows just what He wishes us to sing, and has given us the songs to be sung, it follows that we glorify Him when we in song make known to the world His praise.

*Fifth.* Singing praise to God has a helpful subjective influence. Music has in itself a helpful, soul-stirring, uplifting power. God has planned not only that we shall glorify Him, but also that we shall enjoy Him. In no selfish spirit does He ask us to sing His praise. We are to sing in order that we may obtain a blessing. Ten thousand times ten thousand can bear witness to this truth. God's Word is sung into people. The singing seems to open the gates of the soul till it is flooded with joy. It is not possible to sing "with the spirit and the understanding" the words which God has given to be sung without being wafted heavenward. The singing of God's songs tends to purify the soul, to strengthen the intellect, and to form Godlike character. If they who from the cradle to the grave sing the songs which God has given to be sung should be found zealous for purity in His worship, conscientious in the observance of His day, self-sacrificing in mission work, and loyal to Christ as King of nations, all the praise should be given to Him Who planned this service of song.

Corollary I. The praise service should not be crowded out

of the worship at the family altar. It is not true that there is no time for this service. We cannot afford to give it up in order to find a little more time to get gain or pleasure.

Corollary II. The praise service can be improved in most of our congregations. In the mad haste for new books and new tunes many are unable to sing at all. Before the tune is half learned it may be discarded. The tendency is to minify the words and magnify the music. When the whole attention and thought must be given to the music in order to sing at all we sing by rote and scarcely know what we sing. The music gets ninety-nine parts of our attention and the sentiment one lone part. This evil will be corrected when we settle down to one good tune to each Psalm or part of a Psalm. Then we will have a little time to think about the matter of praise.

Corollary III. The pastor can do something to correct this evil. The old system of explaining the Psalm had some merits. It tended to keep the sentiment of the Psalms before the minds of the singers. As a substitute, let the pastor spend a few moments in each service in pointing out the beauty, sweetness, and richness of the portion selected for the praise service. The people can then more easily sing with the spirit and the understanding.



## THE SINGING OF PRAISE A DUTY

BY THE REV. W. B. SMILEY, D. D., CANONSBURG, PA.

**T**HE offering of praise to God in some form by intelligent creatures like ourselves is a duty which lies at the very foundation of all religious worship, and is therefore assumed or taken for granted in the discussion of this subject. But should we feel ourselves under obligation to "praise the name of God with a song," is the question for present consideration. If we would lay the broadest possible foundation for the duty of singing praise we must go back to the beginning and watch the Creator as He lays the foundations of the world, and hear the praise that is bestowed upon Him "when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." It may be somewhat difficult to determine who are intended by "the morning stars," but certainly this language is intended to convey to us the idea that anthems of praise were sung upon that important occasion. And when it was evident that this world could not fulfil the glorious purpose of its great Creator, on account of the ravages of sin, and the time was come for the manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh, that new heavens and a new earth might be established wherein should dwell righteousness, again we hear "a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

If it be fitting and proper that praise should be sung upon such occasions by angelic choirs, we have certainly a good starting-point from which to build an argument for such a service by the children of God on earth.

As a matter of history we have no means of knowing certainly when man first introduced the service of song into the public

worship of God, but the first instance recorded was when Moses and the children of Israel, standing on the banks of the Red Sea, through which they had passed on dry ground, while their enemies were swept beneath its flood, sang this song unto the Lord: "I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation." However, this historic narrative would seem to indicate, like the account of the paying of tithes by Abraham, and the offering of the first sacrifices, that it was not a new thing just introduced into the worship of God for the first time. It is quite possible, therefore, that soon after the art of music began to be cultivated in the days of Jubal it was given a place in the worship of God. But from the time of the Red Sea experience onward, as special occasion seemed to demand it, a song was composed and sung in praise to God, until the days of the sweet psalmist of Israel, when it became a regular and permanent part of worship, and to the Levites was assigned the duty of "standing every morning to thank and praise the Lord, and likewise at even," according to the record of 1 Chron. xxiii. As soon, therefore, as the chosen people came to have a definite and permanent place for their public worship, so that they could have some regular order and system in its observance, provision was made for the singing of God's praise in connection with the daily sacrifice by having leaders trained and appointed for this service and songs composed which would suitably express their feelings and desires.

And whilst the first singing of praise recorded in the Scriptures would seem to have been a spontaneous outburst of grateful hearts, when the service came to be fully established it was definitely and frequently enjoined upon them by the commandment of Jehovah. In Psalm ix. we are exhorted "to sing praises to the Lord, Who dwelleth in Zion." In Psalm xlvii. the following language is to be found: "Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God

is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding." Many similar references might be cited. Frequently these exhortations to sing praises to God are addressed to all nations of the earth, as in Psalm lxvii.: "O let the nations be glad and sing for joy. Let the people praise Thee, O God; let all the people praise Thee." And again in Psalm lxviii. the language is, "Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth," indicating that this ordinance was intended for universal and perpetual use, and not to be limited to the Mosaic dispensation. There are also intimations that as a part of the Old Testament ritual it was more pleasing and acceptable to God than sacrificial offerings, for the Psalmist says, "I will praise the name of God with a song. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs." The example of our Lord and His Apostles in singing Psalms before they left the upper room, where the sacrament of the Supper was instituted, to go out to the garden of Gethsemane, and the singing of Paul and Silas within the prison walls at Philippi, followed by the miraculous opening of its doors, is evidence sufficient to indicate that this service was intended to form a part of the worship of the New Testament Church.

But the importance of this duty only becomes apparent when we consider it in its relation to the spiritual life of the worshiper. This ordinance was instituted no less for our profit than for God's glory, and its proper observance must necessarily bear a very definite relation to the development of the graces of the Spirit in our hearts. Stafford, in his *History of Music*, says, "In the first ages of the Church music formed a principal part of divine worship." Pliny in writing to Trajan, A. D. III, says, "The church assembled before daybreak to sing alternate hymns to Christ and to God." And does any one profess to believe there was no connection between this fact and the fullness of the Spirit's influence and power which they then enjoyed? In later and corrupt times this part of worship was indifferently performed or entirely neglected, and one of the first efforts of Luther was to restore not only the doctrine of

justification by faith, and the priesthood of the individual believer, but the privilege of popular participation in public worship. Says Waldo Pratt, "If we are minded to imitate the practices of the early Reformation time, there is no item that would be more valuable than the united singing of hymns and psalms. In those days thousands were converted simply through the agency of song." And another has said that "the Church was largely psalm-sung into reformation." It is evident, therefore, that the spirit in which the praise service of a congregation is conducted will determine the state of its spiritual life. Who would expect large spiritual results to manifest themselves where the praise service is left entirely in the hands of the choir, whether ungodly or Christian, while silence is allowed to reign in the pews when God is being worshiped in song? It has been truly said that choir music may foster a deeper and more intelligent spirit of worship. Under the ministry of such impressive music, when reinforced by the personal power of consecrated singers, a vast assembly may be touched and sobered as by the sound of an angel's voice. But the singing of praise is not intended to affect the hearer so much as to utter the thoughts and emotions of the singer, and it can only flourish as a part of religious worship where there is congregational spirituality which craves expression. If strife and division characterize the life of the Church, or if coldness and indifference are manifest to any large degree among God's people, the natural and necessary result will be a lack of spirit and life in the singing of praise to God. To perform this duty aright, therefore, it will be found necessary not only to cultivate a musical quality of voice, without which the singing must necessarily be indifferently performed, but, what is of still greater importance, we must seek to bring all the desires of our hearts and the purposes of our lives into harmony with the character and will of Him Whose praises we sing, else our praise service will be one in which the lips participate, but in which the heart finds no interest. A proper performance of this duty, however, requires that we

“Sing till we feel our hearts  
 Ascending with our tongues;  
 Sing till the love of sin departs,  
 And grace inspires our songs.”

Another fact of no little weight, and not to be overlooked in considering the importance of this duty, is that the singing of God's praise aright on earth is intended to fit us in no small way for participating to our utmost satisfaction in the engagements of heaven. Another has said, “Singing is a leading characteristic of both the enjoyments and the engagements of that holy place. There the harpers are continually rolling from their golden harps anthems of praise.” Dr. Erskine represents the inhabitants of heaven as contending with each other as to who is most indebted to the divine mercy, and who owes to that mercy the loudest praise. After an unsuccessful attempt to settle the question they agree and say

“What, will no rival singer yield  
 He has a match upon the field?  
 Cease, then, and let all agree  
 To praise upon the highest key;  
 Then jointly all the harpers round  
 In mind unite with solemn sound,  
 And strokes upon the highest string  
 Make all the heavenly arches ring.”

And this picture of the Scotch divine is not greatly different from that which was seen in vision on Patmos, for we read in the Revelation: “A voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” Whoever, therefore, has any thought or desire to participate in such a service as this up yonder would do well to put himself in training for it by cultivating a voice and heart fitted to sing songs of praise to God on earth.

## THE PSALMS THE DIVINELY AUTHORIZED AND EXCLUSIVE MANUAL OF PRAISE

BY THE REV. W. I. WISHART, D.D., ALLEGHENY, PA.

IT does not fall within the province of this paper to discuss the great Confessional principle that "the acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will that He may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture." But a reading of the theme to be discussed suggests at once that the position of the United Presbyterian Church touching the matter of praise rests back upon this Confessional principle. The vital question at issue is not so much between inspired and uninspired hymns as it is between authorized and unauthorized hymns.

If the position of the Reformed Churches be true, that no mode of worship is acceptable except that which is prescribed in the Holy Scriptures, either by direct command or by good and necessary inference from them, then the question of divine authorization for the hymns that are used in the formal praise of God becomes a matter of paramount importance. Whatever other considerations may influence men in selecting the sentiment with which they will approach God in praise, it is to be remembered that the real question hinges upon the matter of divine authority. Authorization is the Little Round Top of our position.

It is our privilege in this discussion to assume that the Confessional principle concerning the necessity of divine prescription is established. Two questions, therefore, respecting the matter of praise in the worship of God are suggested by the theme. First. Are the Psalms divinely authorized to be used

as the matter of praise in the formal worship of God? And second. Can such authorization be claimed for the devotional compositions of uninspired men? My theme affirms the first and denies the second of these questions.

It is manifest that this paper can do nothing more than give an outline or syllabus of the argument by which the positions just mentioned are to be maintained. The detailed argument is to appear in other papers. No originality is claimed for the findings here announced. This subject has been so often and so thoroughly discussed that for him who would construct an argument upon it to-day there is nothing left but a work of compilation.

As tending to establish the main thesis of this paper, that the Psalms are the divinely authorized and exclusive manual of praise, it is affirmed, first, that these old Hebrew lyrics were given and distinctly authorized to be used as the matter of praise in the Old Testament Church. This will appear from a number of considerations.

1. There is the *a priori* probability that God would furnish a book of songs in the use of which fitting praise might be offered to Him. Properly to celebrate the character and perfections and glorious works of the Triune God requires a knowledge of Him and His ways that men could not possess without having such knowledge brought to them by special revelation. "The things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God." It is reasonable to expect that the God Who gave such minute direction as to other acts of worship would not leave men without guidance in the supremely important exercise of celebrating in song the goodness and greatness and saving might of Jehovah.

2. The Book of Psalms in its structure and form seems to answer to this natural expectation, and to be such a book of praises as God might furnish men for His worship. Here is a collection of 150 devotional poems. They were written by various men, all of whom were confessedly under the direct

inspiration of God. They were written at various times, stretching over a period of some hundreds of years. Manifestly under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit these particular songs were gathered together out of all the mass of Hebrew poetry, and were called "*Sepher Tehillim*," or the "Book of Praises." And the poems thus selected and collected are for the most part short lyrics, suitable for chanting or singing, and their main subject matter is the ascription of praise to God.

Given the antecedent expectation that God would furnish a book of praises for His people, and understanding these facts concerning the structure and history of this particular book, it would seem to be evident that this book was prepared for no other purpose than for use as a manual of praise in the worship of His Church.

3. The matter and sentiment of these Hebrew poems are especially adapted for use in the praise of God in all ages. It is confessed on all hands that these Psalms are the very highest order of lyric poetry. The world's literature offers nothing to be put in the same class with them. They are filled with sublime expressions of devotion to God and declarations of the greatness of His name and works, such as were peculiarly adapted to that people whose mission it was to proclaim the one living and true God to the world. And in this respect they are adapted to all generations of the Church and to every monotheistic people. In variety of matter they are suited to all ages and conditions and circumstances in which men may find themselves. Out of this collection they can take a Psalm and make a fitting approach to God on the wings of praise.

4. The titles by which these songs are designated in the Word indicate that they were given to be used in praise. They are called "Psalms," which word in itself indicates devotional compositions which are to be sung. They are called the "Songs of the Lord," an expression which would seem to indicate, not only that they are from the Lord, but are to be used in acknowledgment of Him. They are called the "Songs of Zion," an



expression which seems to indicate that they were given for the uses of the Church. The titles and superscriptions of many of the poems contained in this collection indicate clearly that they were prepared for use in the praise of God.

5. These Psalms were directly commanded to be used in the formal worship of the Church under the Old Testament dispensation. This statement will be borne out by such passages as 1 Chron. xvi. 4, 7; 2 Chron. xxix. 30; Ps. cv. 2; Ps. xcv. 1, 2; and Neh. xii. 24.

6. The hymns contained in the Psalter were the only matter of praise in the formal worship of the Old Testament Church. It seems entirely safe to affirm this without any hesitation. There is no hint or trace, either in the Bible or in Jewish tradition, of other songs being used in worship. While there are other highly-wrought pieces of devotional poetry in the Old Testament outside the Book of Psalms, the indications seem to be clear that these were not used as the matter of praise in the formal worship of God. Ancient Jewish tradition would seem to indicate not only that these particular songs were used exclusively as the matter of praise, but that they were the folk-songs, the battle-songs, the festal-anthems, of the people.

These considerations, when their cumulative force is felt, seem to amount to a demonstration of the proposition that the songs contained in the Book of Psalms were the only authorized matter of praise in the Old Testament Church.

But the question arises, Does this ancient appointment hold in the New Testament dispensation? Is it the divine purpose that these inspired hymns given to be used in the Old Testament Church are in like manner authorized in this Christian dispensation? Here is an exceedingly important part of our inquiry; for it is confessedly true that some things were warranted in Old Testament worship which are not authorized in the New. Here is where the position we are defending is most often assailed.

However, as tending to establish the main thesis of this paper, this second general affirmation is made, that the Psalms were

distinctly authorized in the worship of the New Testament Church.

Among many considerations that could be offered in support of this proposition note these:

1. The Church is one in all ages, and any divine regulation affecting worship once made remains in force until it is repealed or in some way superseded. Certain regulations belonging to the worship of the Old Testament economy, having served their end, were abrogated, or a new form of worship took their place under the New Testament dispensation. But until God has plainly indicated that any law of His has served its end and is repealed, we may not venture to consider that it may be disregarded.

He commanded that His people should praise Him with Psalms. There is no repeal of that regulation. There is nothing in all the scope of New Testament teaching to indicate that the ordinance of praise as it had been instituted before had served its end and was repealed. The Church is one. If the Psalms were authorized to be used in the Old Testament dispensation, they are still the authoritative matter of praise.

2. If God had regarded the Psalms as inadequate to meet the needs of the Church in gospel times it is reasonable to suppose that He would have provided a substitute for the ancient book of praises. He provided a better substitute for the old ordinance of circumcision. He did away with the sacrifices, since the great Sacrifice had come. He put the Lord's Supper in place of the old Paschal Feast. Circumcision, the sacrifices, the Passover observance, were outworn. They were inadequate to meet the needs of this larger dispensation. But there is no slightest hint of anything as being offered to serve in place of the Psalms as the matter of praise in the worship of God.

3. The hymns of the Book of Psalms are admirably adapted to serve as the medium of praise in this Christian dispensation.

They are full of Christ. And though written so long before His coming they constantly speak of a Christ as having already

come, as having already suffered, as having already ascended, as coming again to judgment. It is a very strong evidence of the divine intention that these songs should be used to the end of time that they seem always to view the Christ from the Post-Advent standpoint. They set Him forth in His kingly, in His high-priestly, and in His prophetic offices. They give an adequate representation of Christ to the Christian worshiper. They contain the great fundamental gospel ideas of atonement, of regeneration, of forgiveness of sin, of repentance unto life, of sanctification, of a place in the Father's house forevermore for them that love and trust Him.

There is no worthy aspiration which the Christian cannot voice in the words of a Psalm. All those grateful and praiseful emotions kindled in the breast by remembrance of what Jesus Christ has done for us get fitting expression in the words of the sweet singers of Israel. Indeed the greatest Christians have ever betaken themselves to the Psalms to find adequate expression for their love and gratitude toward God.

These songs are adapted to the New Testament dispensation, and adaptation argues divine authorization.

4. The use of the Psalms in the New Testament Church is distinctly sanctioned and their appointment reaffirmed by the example of Jesus Christ and His Apostles. Christ forever linked Psalmody into closest relation with the great Sacrament of the Church when He and His disciples hymned the Hallel that night when He instituted the Supper. There is very general agreement that it was these old songs which the Master Himself sang when He joined in worship in the home, or in the synagogue, or in the splendid ceremonial of the Temple. It not only puts the question of their authorization beyond a doubt, but it certainly gives an added interest and sweetness to these old songs when we remember that Jesus Himself used them in praise.

The example of Christ and His Apostles is quite sufficient to make any practice or form of worship authoritative in the Christian Church.

5. There is definite command to make use of the hymns of inspiration in the worship of the New Testament Church. Such commands are found in the two classic passages, Eph. v. 19 and Col. iii. 16. That the devotional compositions mentioned in these commands can be no other than the songs of the Book of Psalms would seem to be evident from these considerations:

(1) There is no evidence that any uninspired Christian hymn was in existence at the time these commands were given, nor for more than a hundred years thereafter.

(2) These are not commands to make hymns, but to use hymns and Spirit-given songs such as were already at hand. These could be found only within the volume of inspiration.

(3) The epithet "spiritual" seems to mark these songs as being the product of inspiration.

(4) It is implied in one of the passages that by the use of the psalms and hymns and songs the Word of Christ would dwell richly in the worshiper, which expression, "the Word of Christ," we would naturally take to mean the Word of divine inspiration.

(5) It is not likely that the Apostle would put inspired and uninspired songs upon the same basis, and speak of them as equal in devotional value and spiritual profit.

(6) As a matter of fact all the terms used in these passages have been applied to the songs contained in the Book of Psalms.

In view of these considerations we venture to look upon Eph. v. 19 and Col. iii. 16 as commands to make use of the songs of the Psalter in the worship of God.

6. Add to all this the further consideration that there is no evidence of any uninspired devotional composition having been used in the Apostolic Church. If such songs had been used it would seem that there would certainly be some trace or remains of them. Unless these songs were of the most ephemeral kind, like some of the "sunshine hymns" of to-day, they would certainly have survived. And it takes a good stretch of the imagination to think of Paul, the man who wrote the sublime sentiment of the Eighth of Romans or the Thirteenth of First Corinthians,

or of rugged old Peter, singing to God in "sunshine hymns" of the modern type. The fact that there is no trace of any uninspired Christian hymn being used in the formal worship of God, or even being in existence, during the Apostolic era is strong evidence that the Church of that day knew no manual of praise but the Psalter.

These things seem to afford a strong ground for the assertion that the inspired songs of the Psalter have been the authorized psalmody of the Christian Church, as well as of the Church of the Old Testament dispensation.

And this general conclusion is confirmed still further when we take a general survey of the Early Church and its customs in the years immediately following the death of the Apostles. Light is thrown on what was regarded by the Apostles and those contemporaneous with them as the divine prescription in worship when we discover what was the practice of the Church they founded in the days when that Church was still feeling, fresh and strong, the impulse of their lives and the force of their teaching. These things can be asserted without hesitation concerning the Early Church:

1. The songs of inspiration were used exclusively as the matter of praise for a period of at least one hundred years after the death of the Apostles. If this statement is true, and I think it can be fairly well established, it makes it in the highest degree probable that the Apostles and their contemporaries knew no other matter of praise.

2. The Psalms constituted the chief material used in praise through all the period of the Early Church. No one who is in any way conversant with the history of the first four centuries of the Christian era will offer for a moment to question this statement. The Psalms had the chief place. The Church of that day was wedded to them. The regularity with which they were used and the high regard in which they were held indicate that they had come to the Early Church with the strongest possible sanctions.

3. The use of the compositions of uninspired men in the worship of God seems to have been begun in the Early Church by certain teachers of false doctrine with a view to the wider diffusion of their particular theories. So far as the beginnings of this practice can be discovered its origin would appear to have been in the interests of heresy.

4. The orthodox appear to have adopted the uninspired hymns with great hesitance and reluctance, and only in order to counteract the teachings they regarded as false.

Now when all these points are taken into consideration—the strong assurance that the Psalms were the divinely authorized book of praise for the Old Testament Church, the equally strong assurance that they were accepted and reappointed for the Christian Church, the fact that uninspired songs were not used in the days of Christ and His Apostles, nor were in any way approved, and the first practice of the Early Church, together with the history of the first introduction of uninspired hymns,—all these things make a very strong case in favor of the Psalms of inspiration as the only manual of praise for the Church to the end of the world.

This conclusion, thus buttressed, is still further strengthened by some general statements touching the whole question.

1. The superiority of the Word of God over all words of men will be admitted, and the Psalms of inspiration are certainly more fit to be used in the offering of praise than the best compositions of human genius.

2. The Psalms have a strength in their conception of God which is peculiar to themselves, and which makes them especially helpful as a medium of devotion.

3. The Psalms express more fully than any other book the religious experience of believers. Those Christians of deepest piety and devotion have come to live in the "psalm country," and it is for this, among other reasons—in these old songs they find their own experiences so accurately mirrored.

4. No system or collection of merely human hymns has ever

proved satisfactory to the Church at large. They all lack at important points.

5. The Psalter is the only absolutely safe hymn-book. It contains no error. It teaches no falsehood. It needs no amendment or expurgation. It is the Word of God. All men of all faiths can take up these old songs and sing them, and teach their children to sing them, and all the while be sure that they are planting no seeds of error.

6. The Psalter is the true union hymn-book. This statement follows naturally from the one last made. There is much talk of a union of the Churches. And there are many things that would have to be adjusted before organic union can possibly be brought about. But it would seem that the matter of praise might be adjusted very easily by adopting the one hymn-book in which all Churches believe, the God-given Songs of Zion.

7. It has been demonstrated in long years of experience that the exclusive use of the Psalms as the matter of praise develops a strong and sturdy and devout type of Christian character. The same cannot be said of the songs of merely human composition. In these days when there is so much moral weakness and flabbiness of character, when convictions are held so lightly, and moral boundary lines are marked so very indistinctly, there is need that the whole Church get back to the strong old songs of divine inspiration. They will put iron in the blood. They will put strength into the purposes. They will make men humble before God, but mighty for His truth's sake when they stand before men. They will give us for these days character like that of the Covenanters and the Huguenots and the Puritans, men who know God and will dare to be true. And that is the sort of revival which the Church most needs.

## THE PSALMS THE DIVINELY AUTHORIZED AND EXCLUSIVE MANUAL OF PRAISE

BY THE REV. JAMES A. KENNEDY, D. D., LITTLE YORK, ILL.

**I**T is not to be expected that any new or original arguments will be presented in this paper. The ground has been so thoroughly covered by various writers that little is left but to follow in their steps. Further, the limits of time will not permit more than the bare outline of the argument; the elaboration and verification must be left to others.

The Law of Worship, namely, that everything in the worship of God must be divinely prescribed, and that want of clear appointment is virtual prohibition, has been presented and needs no additional proof. The position of the Church for an exclusive Psalmody rests on that law, and the law itself is not now under discussion, but is assumed as proved.

We may be permitted in passing, however, to allude to an attempt by a recent writer to break the whole force of this accepted law of Protestant worship as applied to the position of our Church on Psalmody. Admitting the validity of the law in general, he charges us with transferring a law of the priesthood without limitation or modification to the prophethood. "Psalmody is a prophetic and not a priestly function," he says. "Presumably the oldest Psalm in the Psalter was written by Moses, the prophet of God." This plausible theory confounds things essentially different, and is the more delusive because containing a partial truth. Psalmody is a prophetic function in so far as the composing of Psalms is concerned, and the objector at once cites the composition of the Ninetieth Psalm as illustration. And he who would venture on the prophetic function of making psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs for the Church without pro-



phetic inspiration would be presumptuous indeed. But while the composing of Psalms is a prophetic function, the singing of them in worship is a priestly function, an offering, the offering of praise to God, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name (Heb. xiii. 15). The Scripture, "Ye are an holy priesthood . . . to offer up spiritual sacrifices" (1 Pet. ii. 5), constitutes every saint a priest and clearly under the law of priesthood, as our objector admits that priests were. But all are not prophets, for He only gave "*some* to be prophets."

Ours is not a question as to what is the consensus of the Church; nor as to what is most effective and acceptable with the masses; nor is it primarily a question of inspiration and an inspired hymnology. Inspiration has an important bearing, and, as we hold, is an essential prerequisite to the making of songs of praise. Yet there are inspired songs in the Word that are not for the service of praise. Our question is narrowed down to this: What has God appointed to be sung in His worship? What is the will of God? We will endeavor to show that the Psalms contained in the Psalter are appointed to be the exclusive manual of praise. If we shall be able to show, first, a clear appointment for the Psalms, and, second, that no other songs have this appointment, we will have established our position.

I. Were the Psalms authorized in the Old Testament worship? There are very few who deny such appointment.

1. Praise in songs did not form a part of the regular worship of God's people until the time of David, that golden age of the Theocracy.<sup>1</sup> Then it was that this delightful part of worship was inaugurated. But who is sufficient for this great work? The things of God knoweth none, not even an angel, but the Spirit of God (1 Cor. ii. 11). What is praise? The word is derived

<sup>1</sup> Singing praise does not seem to have formed a part of Patriarchal worship except on certain great occasions that especially called for praise, when someone under the impulse of the Holy Spirit uttered a song to celebrate the event. We have instances of this in the songs of Moses, Miriam, Deborah, and others. These fugitive pieces were not for permanent use, and found no place in the authorized collection.

from the word "price." But who knows God's price or value? To prepare a complete and sufficient manual of praise one must know, on the one hand, all the divine excellences, for they are to be set forth in sufficient measure and due proportion; and, on the other hand, the whole range of human devotional feeling called forth by contemplating the divine perfections. But such vast knowledge is only possible to one to whom a divine revelation has been made. And to give adequate expression to this knowledge divine inspiration is an absolute prerequisite. God's mighty works who can express or show forth all His praise, is a question of the Spirit most pertinent in this discussion. It is antecedently probable that God would give the Spirit of revelation and inspiration to some man or men for this purpose. God evidently deemed it necessary to have His praises prepared thus, for as a matter of fact He inspired David, Asaph, and others to compose them. And He never puts forth divine power unless it is necessary. God kept the manual of praise strictly under His own control. Why should He be indifferent to this matter now? And why should we be put off without a divine book for this dispensation? Are we not as worthy of such a perfect book as the Old Testament Church? The Spirit of inspiration and the authority with which David was clothed constituted him the sweet Psalmist of Israel, of the whole Israel of God.

2. That the Psalter was used in the Old Testament Church chiefly for praise is clear from the internal evidence of the Psalter itself. (a) The title of the book in Hebrew, *Tehillim*, "Praises," or *Sepher Tehillim*, "Book of Praises," and the Greek title, "*Psalmoi*," all witness to this fact. (b) The assigning or dedicating many of the Psalms to "The Chief Musician" shows that they were made for a musical, and not a liturgical, service. In the Hebrew large numbers of them are called *mizmor*, *tehillah*, or *shir*, terms that clearly imply use in song. (c) The structure and contents of the songs themselves go to confirm this view. They are all full of the spirit and language of praise. They exhort to praise the Lord, to make a joyful noise, to sing Psalms,

to magnify His name with a song, etc. The writers call upon their souls, upon their neighbors, the Gentiles, and everything that hath breath to praise the Lord. The sentiments are admirably, yes, perfectly, adapted for praising God.

3. As to Biblical evidence outside the Psalter, the various references to praise in the Old Testament show conclusively that the Psalms were the matter of the songs. At the dedication of the temple in Solomon's time, and again in the days of Zerubabel, when the foundation of the new temple was laid, the Psalms were sung. 2 Chron. v. 13; Ezra iii. 11, 12. And again they were sung when good King Hezekiah, in a reformation that is worth more than all the history of the years of Israel's backsliding as a testimony to what had divine appointment, did everything "according to the commandment of David . . . for so was the commandment of the Lord by His prophets." 2 Chron. xxix. 25. "Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph the seer." 2 Chron. xxix. 30. The singers came up from captivity with Ezra and Nehemiah. We are told that "both the singers and the porters kept the charge of their God . . . according to the commandment of David, and of Solomon his son. For in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God." Neh. xii. 45, 46. These reformations and rededications are the best witnesses of what was the real practice required by the Lord, for they then sought to do everything according to the divine pattern. The objection that songs outside the Psalter were used in God's worship, as the songs of Moses, of Hezekiah, and of Habakkuk, is no sanction for singing extra-Biblical hymns. And if there were uninspired songs used at times, they are only exceptions and infractions that prove the rule. When United Presbyterian choirs sing anthems taken from other sources than the Psalter, it does not prove that we are not exclusively Psalm-singers. If it could be proved that there was no singing in the synagogue, which we deny, it would not invalidate this

argument, for it would still be true that whatever singing of praise was practiced then, whether in the temple or at the Passover, these were the songs authorized for use.

4. Then there is extra-Biblical evidence that the Psalter was the only manual of the Church's phrase, as, *e. g.*, the Talmud, the Mishna, Maimonides, and Josephus. But others will handle this subject.

If it could be shown that only a small part of the Psalter was used by the Old Testament Church, and that the compilation was completed at the time the Old Testament Canon closed, it may be replied that they began with that solid foundation that David and Asaph laid, and that new songs were used only as they became incorporated into the Psalter. The lateness of the completion of this marvelous collection of praise songs argues strongly for the view that they were mainly for the New Testament Church. Certain it is that they are better adapted to the Christian dispensation than to the Jewish, for they speak of a Saviour already come, and make references to Him that would be impenetrable mysteries to Old Testament saints. And, besides, they were more largely used by the Early and the Reformation Churches than by the Jewish.

The great majority of Biblical writers are agreed that the Psalter was the only authorized manual of praise in the Old Testament Church.

II. Coming to the Christian era, what was the status of these songs in the new economy? What was the New Testament manual of praise? Was the authorization of the Psalter repealed, abrogated, or terminated?

1. No claim for such a termination has ever been established, seldom asserted. There *were* changes made, as, *e. g.*, the mode of presenting the truth was changed, the Passover was changed into the Lord's Supper, circumcision, after long controversy, was changed to Baptism. But the Sabbath and the Psalter remained unchanged, save the transfer of the Sabbath to the first day of the week. That the use of the Psalter ceased, no one

will seriously argue. If any additional songs were introduced, they cannot now be found.

2. We find, too, that when Jesus ascended up on high and gave gifts, there were apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers given, but no psalmist. And among the great diversity of gifts by the one Spirit the gift of psalmody is not mentioned.

3. Instead of repealing their appointment, Christ and His Apostles confirmed it. At the institution of the Lord's Supper, that first instance of distinctively Christian worship, Jesus and His disciples hymned a part of the Hallel, as scholars of every school are agreed. As Lightfoot says: "He Who could have made every disciple to be a David sings the Psalms of David." This example is authorization of the Psalter for New Testament use, and at the same time the highest testimony to its suitability and sufficiency for Christian worship.

4. That they were designed for the New Testament dispensation is evident from the fact that they are full of Christ. Surely our Lord is here as He is in no other Book of Scripture, not excepting the Gospels. They are quoted by the New Testament writers in proof of Christ's divinity more than all the other Old Testament Books combined. And He is not pictured as a Saviour to come, not once, but as already come; not a prophetic, but the historic Christ; and for this reason they are better adapted to our use than they were to the use of the ancient Church.

5. In addition to the Saviour's example, we are commanded in the name of Christ by His Apostles to sing the Psalms. "Is any merry? let him sing Psalms." Jas. v. 13. It is not to be thought for a moment that James with his strong Jewish leanings would commend the twelve tribes scattered abroad to sing anything but their familiar songs of the Psalter. The author of the Hebrews would not mean anything else when he exhorted his Jewish readers to offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. Heb. xiii. 15. And Paul also commands the Ephesians (Eph. v. 19) and the Colossians (Col. iii. 16) to sing the Psalms. Whatever

else may be meant by the words "hymns" and "spiritual songs," it is quite generally agreed that the Davidic Psalter is referred to by the term "psalms," and hence this is a command to sing them.

6. Albert Barnes says of the Psalms: "They were made to be sung, not read." And Dr. J. A. Alexander says of them: "They are all ecclesiastical lyrics, psalms or hymns, intended to be permanently used in public worship, not excepting those which bear the clearest impress of original connection with the social, domestic, or personal relations and experiences of the writers." This is an unbiased and competent witness that the Psalms, all of them without exception, are to be used permanently.

We believe that their authorization for New Testament use cannot be successfully disputed.

III. But has anything else been authorized for the New Testament dispensation?

1. The so-called songs of Zachariah and Mary and the poetic measures supposed to be found in Eph. v. 14 and 1 Tim. iii. 16 are not songs in the proper sense of the word, and there is no evidence that they were ever used in public worship.

2. If 1 Cor. xiv. 26, "Every one of you hath a psalm, hath a teaching, hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation," be regarded as some sort of sanction for uninspired hymns, we may say that scholars differ as to the reference here. (1) If it was an improvised psalm produced under divine inspiration, as some think, then it is no warrant for us, for the like gift is not now possessed. Such improvisations were inspired and have passed away as being too ephemeral for the use of the Church at large. (2) Others hold that the reference is to the announcing or starting of a Psalm, as we do in our social prayer meetings. What the Apostle cautions them against is the starting of one exercise while another is being engaged in; for all things are "to be done for edifying," "decently and in order." There is nothing here authorizing anything but Psalms.

3. If there is any appointment of extra-Biblical songs it will

be found in the well-known passages, Eph. v. 19 and Col. iii. 16, which read: "Speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord." "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God." The authority for the use of modern lyrics is founded upon the supposed distinction between "psalms," on the one hand, and "hymns and spiritual songs," on the other, the "psalms" being reckoned inspired, and the "hymns and spiritual songs" uninspired. This is the very acropolis of the defenders of uninspired songs in the worship of God. Now if it be found that no such distinction existed in the Apostle's mind or in his time, then this supposed authority for uninspired lyrics vanishes. The full exegesis of these passages will be given in other papers, and only some general statements will be made here.

(1) Confessedly the Apostle here commands the use of songs then in existence. Where are those songs now? Can the friends of modern lyrics produce what they think are here called hymns? When they do so we will sing them.

(2) Whatever they command us to use in *singing*, they contain no warrant for *making* or for *introducing* anything into God's worship. Nor is there a hint in all Scripture of a direction or a promise of help to make such songs.

(3) The lexicographers are against this distinction, be they Hebrew, Greek, or English. And ancient writers use the word "hymns" quite commonly in speaking of the Psalter.

(4) The word "spiritual" is against it. Such lexicographers as Thayer, Cremer, and Robinson, and such scholars as Dr. B. B. Warfield of Princeton, Meyer, and others, define it as meaning "produced or inspired by the Holy Spirit." Meyer holds that "spiritual songs" are the genus, of which "psalms" and "hymns" are the species.

(5) As the mention of the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost in the Apostolic benediction and in the formula of

Baptism is accepted by all Trinitarians as a valid argument for the equal divinity of all the Persons named, just so the mention of the three kinds of lyrics together in these texts proves them to be of equal divine origin.

(6) The purpose to be effected by this singing, being "filled with the Spirit" and "letting the word of Christ dwell in us," is best served by songs inspired by the Spirit and saturated with Christ, as the songs of the Psalter surely are.

(7) In the Greek version of the Old Testament, then in general use, and quoted by Christ and His Apostles, these very words are found in the titles of the Psalms of David. Many are entitled *psalmos*, some *humnos*, and a number *odā*. In this Greek version Psalm lxxii., which closes one of the five books into which the Psalter is divided, ends with these words: "The hymns of David the son of Jesse are ended."

From these considerations and others that might be mentioned we hold that the safe conclusion is that the distinction between "psalms" and "hymns" so commonly made is without warrant, that the claim of authorization founded upon it falls to the ground, and that these passages become instead an authorization of the Psalms alone.

#### IV. Confirmatory considerations.

1. The practice of the Early Church confirms our position. The universal use of the Psalter is witnessed by the writings of Tertullian, Basil, Athanasius, Augustine, Jerome, and Chrysostom, and the Apostolic Constitutions. That they were used exclusively by the orthodox seems to be indicated by these same writers. But as showing the sentiment of the Church the Council of Laodicea, as late as 360 A.D., forbade the use of anything in the worship of God but the Psalms of the Bible. According to the historians the hymns of men were introduced by men who sought thus to propagate their heresies, and the orthodox party, hesitatingly at first, made hymns to meet the false doctrine.

2. Another confirmatory consideration is the suitability and



sufficiency of the Psalms for the wants of the saints in every age and clime, in every experience and exigency of life. Nothing can compare with them for the people of God in trial. They sweep the whole range of the soul's emotions, reaching profounder depths and loftier heights than any other literature. There is not a truly spiritual emotion awakened by the consideration of the mercy, grace, truth, or holiness of God that may not find here its most appropriate expression. They have been especially prized in times of persecution. Jesus quoted them on the Cross, the Waldenses and Albigenses sang them in the long dark ages when they kept the light of truth burning, martyrs sang them going to the stake or the rack, and committed their souls to God in the words of Psalms. Yes, the martyrs were all Psalm-singers, for by feeding on this kind of food they put iron into their blood. The good, the great, the godly have ever been the most delighted with these songs. Their suitability and sufficiency are argument for their exclusive use.

3. It is also a confirmation of our position that we find no controversy in the Early Church about hymnology. They contended sharply about circumcision, and at times it seemed to divide Churches. The Hebrew Christians were very tenacious for their law and ritual, as the writings of Paul abundantly show. Is it reasonable to suppose they would let go the Psalter without a struggle? It was endeared to the Old Testament saints by the most hallowed associations, and to have had it displaced by new and merely human productions, or to have had those human productions put upon an equality with their divinely prepared and authorized manual, would have called forth the most bitter opposition. But there is not a syllable in the New Testament or in the writings of the early Fathers of such opposition. In the later days of the Church there was opposition to the introduction of man-made song, which shows that the divine Psalter was the manual of the Apostolic Church.

4. There is also an indirect or negative argument founded on the evil results of a departure from our position. Our Saviour

gave us this practical principle for testing every practice and doctrine: "By their fruits ye shall know them." If the practice of worshiping God with uninspired song produces evil fruit, then it is not a tree that our Heavenly Father has planted. What are some evil fruits directly traceable to the practice of the Churches that oppose our principle?

(1) The earliest introduction of uninspired hymns was, according to historians, for the purpose of introducing heretical doctrines.

(2) It has borne the fruit of excluding the Psalms from all the hymnologies of modern hymn-singing Churches. While these brethren generally admit that the New Testament authorizes the use of the Psalms, they have practically discarded this divinely authorized book as a book, and allow but a few rare specimens of this heavenly collection to find a place among their man-made hymns. It has come to this, that the Churches will worship God with the Psalms exclusively or with the Psalms excluded. This is not good fruit.

(3) A practice that leads people to say hard things about a precious portion of God's Word in order to defend itself is an indefensible practice. Dr. Watts, the father of hymnology in the Reformed Churches, in his *Imitations of the Psalms* says: "My design has been to make David and Asaph speak the common sense of a Christian." We heard a Disciple minister quote with great relish and glee the words of Henry Ward Beecher: "David seems to have been inspired at times by the Spirit of the Lord and at other times by the spirit of the devil." The common sneer at the Psalms as Jewish and unchristian in spirit is a serious charge against a part of Scripture that Christ Himself sang. This is not good fruit.

(4) It leads to confounding poetic genius and fervor with divine inspiration, to the great disparagement of the latter. A few years ago a writer in a religious journal claimed that Dr. Ray Palmer was inspired in writing the hymn "My Faith Looks up to Thee." It is no uncommon thing to be told that the writers

of modern hymns are just as much inspired as David was. Is it any wonder that so many people are off on the subject of inspiration? This is not good fruit.

(5) Judging by the criticisms of hymn-singing ministers, there must be considerable error in the hymnology of the Churches, and this is a most effective way to propagate it. Hence the practice of using human songs propagates error, and at the same time perpetuates the division of the body of Christ.

Judging this tree of singing uninspired hymns by its fruit, as the Saviour told us to do, we feel compelled to say that it is not a good tree.

To sum up our argument: we have endeavored to prove

1. That the Davidic Psalter was the only praise manual authorized for the Old Testament dispensation. Few dispute this.

2. That this authorization has never been withdrawn or terminated. This, too, is generally conceded.

3. That the Psalms were authorized in the New Testament dispensation by the example of the Saviour and the commands of His Apostles.

4. That if a new book of songs had been needed, Christ would have provided it. But no praise songs of any kind have come down from that time.

5. That there is no command or authority to make any other songs, nor is there any promise of help to make them. No psalmist or gift of psalmody is mentioned or was given in the New Testament Church.

6. That the passages relied on as authority for the singing of extra-Biblical songs are really only commands to sing the Psalms of the Bible.

7. That this is confirmed by the practice of the Early Church, the Psalms being in general and exclusive use for more than a hundred years after the days of the Apostles.

8. That the argument is confirmed by the suitability and sufficiency of the Psalter, as shown by the most eminent scholars and the most consecrated saints.

9. That the argument is confirmed by the fact that there is no evidence of any controversy about the introduction of human songs in the days of the Apostles.

10. And that, last, it is confirmed by the evils resulting from a departure from our position, viz.: (a) The exclusion of God's Psalter from worship. (b) The occasion of hard sayings about a precious portion of God's Word. (c) The confusion of poetic genius with inspiration, to the disparagement of the latter. (d) A fruitful means of propagating error. (e) A perpetuation of the divisions among Christians.

## THE PSALMS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT CHURCH

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**I**N the line of argument this subject is second only to the subject of the divine appointment of the Psalter as an exclusive manual of praise.

Was the Psalter used in divine worship in the Old Testament Church? Were the Psalms used in connection with the services of the temple and the synagogue? Were they used exclusively in these services? If these questions can be answered in the affirmative, then we have solid ground on which to build. If these questions cannot be answered in the affirmative, then there is an impairment of the foundation on which our doctrine of the exclusive use of the Psalms stands. In a sense this question may be said to be the crux of the whole discussion about Psalmody.

### PRELIMINARY REMARKS

The Psalter, like the Bible, was a growth. David may be called the father of Psalmody. He left the impress of his inspired genius on the whole subject of temple praise. To the Davidic collection of Psalms others were added in the days of Isaiah and Jeremiah. The period of the Exile was prolific of Psalmody, as it also was of prophetic and historical literature. But the greatest number of Psalms were written after the Babylonian Exile, during the Restoration Period, as it is called. Just when the last Psalms were written we do not know. Most modern authorities and some older ones, *e. g.*, John Calvin, are disposed to make the Seventy-Fourth Psalm and others to be as late as the Maccabean times. We may most safely conclude that the Psalms were all written and collected into the Psalter previous

to 100 B.C., and probably at a much earlier date. Whatever view we take as to the date of the completion of the Psalter, it is apparent that it was a matter of growth. Psalms were written by David and others as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. These Psalms were gathered into little hymnals from time to time. Combinations of these hymnals were made until there were five Psalm Books. Finally these five were combined into one Psalter, our present Book of Psalms.

#### THE ARGUMENT

I. These Psalms are inspired. The fact that they are in the Canon as a part of Sacred Scripture proves this beyond the need of discussion.

II. The Psalms were prepared to be sung.

1. Their very name suggests this. The Book is called "*Sepher Tehillim*," "*Book of Praises*," or "*Book of Songs*." The name given to the Book indicates that these odes are to be sung.

2. The titles to the individual Psalms indicate the same purpose. The following are some of the titles: *Tehillah*, *Mizmor*, *Shir*, and *Tephillah*, which are rendered respectively *Hymn*, *Psalm*, *Song*, and *Prayer*. At the head of many of the Psalms there are directions about the music to which the words are to be sung: e. g., "*Lamenatseah*," i. e., *to the leader of the singing*; "*Al-hasseminith*," i. e., *to be sung by bass voices*; "*Al-alamoth*," i. e., *to be sung by soprano voices*.

3. The contents of the Psalms are praise material. They are lyric poetry of the highest order. That the Psalms were prepared to be sung in praise to God no one can doubt.

III. Praises were sung in the Old Testament worship. This point has already been anticipated somewhat. That even in Northern Israel music and song accompanied the worship of the great sanctuaries in the eighth century B. C. we have on the indisputable evidence of the prophet Amos (v. 21-23): "I hate,

I despise your feasts, I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Take thou away from Me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols." The prophet, it will be noted, is speaking of sanctuary worship, when he declares that God will not accept their service of song so long as they are living unrighteous lives. It is clear from 2 Samuel (vi. 5) that music and song were a part of the worship in David's time. Speaking of the bringing up of the Ark to Jerusalem the writer says: "And David and all the house of Israel played before Jehovah with all manner of instruments." Such instrumentation in the worship of God was the accompaniment of a song service. Isaiah adds his testimony in these words: "Ye shall have a song as in the night when a holy feast is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come unto the mountain of Jehovah, to the Rock of Israel" (Isa. xxx. 29). The service of song in connection with worship is so well understood that Isaiah uses the custom as an illustration of the joyful singing that shall prevail when repentant Israel shall be greatly blessed of God. This service of song is distinctly implied in the song of Hezekiah, recorded in Isaiah: "Jehovah is ready to save me: Therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of Jehovah" (xxxviii. 20). Such language would not be used except the service of song was a regular part of the worship at the temple. Still another evidence of the song service is found in Lamentations (ii. 7): "Jehovah hath cast off His altar, He hath abhorred His sanctuary; He hath given up into the hands of the enemy the walls of her palaces: They have made a noise in the house of Jehovah as in the day of a solemn assembly." The only noise in connection with a feast of a solemn assembly in the house of the Lord to which the shouts of the victorious Babylonians could be likened would be the loud singing of the multitude of people assembled to worship God.

Ezekiel in describing his new temple says: "And without the inner gate were chambers for the singers" (xl. 44). There must

have been singers in Ezekiel's time to conduct the service of song.

Ezra, in enumerating those who returned from the Captivity with Zerubbabel in 537 as in one way or another connected with the service of the temple, *e. g.*, priests, Levites, porters, *et al.*, says: "The singers: the children of Asaph, a hundred twenty and eight" (Ezra ii. 41). Here there is undoubted reference to a regularly organized class of singers belonging to the sacred ministries of the temple; and the way in which these singers are spoken of may be taken as evidence that there was a guild of temple singers before the Exile. See also Ezra iii. 10.

The writer of Nehemiah has this to say: "For in the days of David and Asaph of old there was a chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God" (Neh. xii. 46). See also Neh. xiii. 10.

Maimonides of the twelfth century, the greatest Jewish authority on the Talmud and Mishna, speaking of these temple singers, says: "And some of them were Levites, and some of them were Israelites of note, who had married with the priesthood; for none of them might go up into the desks of the songmen but men of note" (*Kele Mikdash*, cap. 3). In a gloss the Mishna, in the treatise *Erachin*, says of these singers: "These were families of Israel of note, whose daughters the priests had married."

That songs of praise to God were sung in connection with the service of the temple no one can doubt. The argument for it is unanswerable.

IV. These songs of praise which were sung in connection with the service of the temple were the Psalms of the Psalter. Inasmuch as the Psalter is the only group of praise-songs that existed in Old Testament times, so far as we know, we would naturally conclude that these were the songs which were sung in the temple worship. It is scarcely possible to draw any other conclusion. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that the Psalms were written to be sung in praise to God.



But there is much additional testimony on this point. - "And he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the Ark of Jehovah. . . . Then on that day did David first ordain to give thanks unto Jehovah, by the hand of Asaph and his brethren" (1 Chron. xvi. 4-7). This is said in connection with David's care for the Ark which he had just brought up to Jerusalem. Now follows in verses eight and thirty-six inclusive one of the songs which these singers sang: "O give thanks unto Jehovah, call upon His name." The song is none other than fifteen verses of Psalm cv., thirteen verses of Psalm xcvi., and three verses of Psalm cvi. It is true that the quotation is not always exact, but it is as exact as some of the quotations made by New Testament writers from the Old Testament. Even if the contention of the critics be correct, to the effect that the Psalms which are united to form this temple song were not written till after 400 B. C., and that Chronicles, which was written about 325 B. C., is only idealized history, yet the fact would remain that in the Chronicler's day and earlier these Psalms were sung in the temple service. The testimony of Chronicles to the singing of the Psalms in the temple service is conclusive. According to 2 Chron. (xx. 21) Jehoshaphat "appointed them that should sing unto Jehovah, and give praise in holy array, as they went out before the army and say, Give thanks unto Jehovah; for His loving-kindness endureth forever." The song which these singers sang was Psalm cxxxvi., the Chronicler, according to Jewish custom, giving the first line of the Psalm. Hezekiah "set the Levites in the house of Jehovah with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David. . . . Moreover Hezekiah commanded the Levites to sing praises unto Jehovah with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer" (2 Chron. xxix. 25-30). Both David and Asaph were reputed writers of our Psalms. At the time the Chronicles were written "the words of David" and "Psalm," according to the common conception, were synonymous terms. They sang the Psalms of David.

Then, too, all the references to song service at the temple made under the previous head imply in no uncertain way that the Psalms were the songs sung.

“ Oh come, let us sing unto Jehovah ;  
 Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.  
 Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving,  
 Let us make a joyful noise unto Him with Psalms.”

(Ps. xc. 1, 2).

Here we might rest with this argument. But there is a great mass of extra-Biblical material testifying to the use of the Psalms in Old Testament worship which is most interesting and valuable. There is a group of six thanksgiving Psalms which abound in the compound word “ hallelujah.” Two of them begin with it, and four of them end with it. The key-note of the group is “ Praise Ye Jehovah.” This group consists of Psalms cxiii. and cxviii. inclusive, and is called the “ Hallel,” *i. e.*, the hallelujah group. In the later temple service this Hallel was sung in connection with the service of the Passover, the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Tabernacles, and indeed all the feasts. Dr. Lightfoot, of Westminster Assembly fame, who still remains one of the greatest authorities on the Talmud and Mishna, and as well on the services of the temple, in speaking of the Passover says: “ Now the song that was sung at this time, while they were killing the Passover, was called the ‘ Hallel.’ ” The Babylonian Talmud says: “ Every company said over the Hallel three times; for their paschals were many, and they were bound to the singing of the ‘ Hallel ’ at the slaying of them.” They chanted, during the killing of the Passover, Psalms cxiii. and cxviii. inclusive. Maimonides, on the authority of the Talmud, says: “ All the time they were killing and offering, the Levites said over the Hallel; if they had finished the Hallel, and the company had not yet done, they said it over again; and if they had finished saying it over again and the company had

not yet done, they set to it a third time." In another paragraph Maimonides says: "This Hallel was said over eighteen days in the year and one night: viz., at the killing of the Passover, at the feast of Pentecost, on the eight days of the feast of Tabernacles, on the eight days of the feast of Dedication, and on the night of the Passover." The "saying of the Hallel" means of course the chanting of it. The same authority in his treatise on *Megillah* and *Chanuchah*, says: "The custom of saying over the Hallel in the days of the former wise men was thus: The chief among them that was to read the Hallel, after he had said a prayer, began thus, 'Hallelujah'; and all the people answered, 'Hallelujah.' He goes on and says: 'Praise ye the servants of the Lord'; and all the people answered 'Hallelujah.' He proceeds and says, 'Praise the name of the Lord'; and all the people answered, 'Hallelujah.' He says further, 'Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth, even forever more'; and all the people answered, 'Hallelujah.' And so at every passage, till they answered 'Hallelujah' one hundred and twenty-three times over; and of that number were the years of Aaron. Now when he that read it came to the beginning of any Psalm, as when he read, 'When Israel came out of Egypt,' the people repeated and said, 'When Israel came out of Egypt'; but when he said, 'And the house of Jacob from a strange people,' then the people answered, 'Hallelujah'; and so forward, till he came to, 'I love the Lord because He hath heard my voice'; and there the people repeated, 'I love the Lord because He hath heard my voice.' And so when he said, 'Praise the Lord, all ye nations,' they repeated, 'Praise the Lord, all ye nations.' And when he came to, 'Save now, Lord, I beseech Thee,' the people repeated, 'Save now, Lord, I beseech Thee'; though it be not at the beginning of a Psalm. And when he said, 'I beseech Thee, now, send prosperity,' they rehearsed and said, 'I beseech Thee, now, send prosperity.' And when he said, 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord,' all the people answered, 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.'"

A careful comparison of this long quotation with Psalms cxiii. and cxviii. inclusive will show the following order of service: When the leader repeated the first line of any one of these Psalms, the people chanted it after him. But when the leader repeated any of the other lines in these Psalms, the people answered "Hallelujah." To this last order there were two exceptions, viz., when the leader read the first lines of verses 25 and 26 respectively in Psalm cxviii., the people chanted them after him, instead of saying "Hallelujah," as in all the other lines. It should be noted that while the first line of Psalm cxiii. is translated "Praise ye Jehovah," it could as appropriately be translated "Hallelujah," for in the Hebrew it is just the compound word "Hallelujah." No one can doubt that the Hallel consisted of Psalms cxiii. and cxviii. inclusive. These Psalms were sung over and over again at every feast observed by the Jews. The Talmud and the Jewish writers generally go into further detail describing just how and when these Psalms were sung. There were four cups of wine drunk in observing the Passover. Dr. Lightfoot in his great treatise on "The Temple Service" says: "And now we are come to the fourth cup, which was called 'the cup of the Hallel'; for he finished the Hallel at it, and at it he said the blessing of the song. He had begun the Hallel over the second cup; for he concluded the *Haggadah*, or showing forth of their deliverance (as 1 Cor. xi. 26), with the rehearsal of the One Hundred and Thirteenth and One Hundred and Fourteenth Psalms. And now he begins with the One Hundred and Fifteenth and rehearseth that, and the One Hundred and Sixteenth, and the One Hundred and Seventeenth, and the One Hundred and Eighteenth; for these six Psalms were the Hallel, as was observed even now."

If a fifth cup was drunk, they sang with it what they called the Great Hallel. What was the Great Hallel? Rabbi Judah says, from "O give thanks" to "By the rivers of Babylon," that is, Psalms cxxxvi. and cxxxvii. inclusive. Rabbi Jochanan says, from "A Song of Degrees" to "By the rivers of Baby-

lon." Psalm cxx. has at its head "A Song of Degrees"; it is the first of the fifteen "Songs of Degrees." Rabbi Jochanan's testimony is to the effect that the Great Hallel, which was sung with the fifth cup, consisted of Psalms cxx. and cxxxvii. inclusive. Sometimes also at these feasts they sang Psalm cv., and at others Psalm xcvi. In connection with the bringing in of the firstfruits Psalms cxxii., cl., and xxx. were chanted. Psalm xxx. was also sung at the feast of Dedication. All this and more is given on the authority of the Talmud, the Mishna, Maimonides, Dr. Lightfoot, and Jewish Rabbis who are recognized authorities in such matters.

The Mishna (*Tamid*, cap. 7, sec. 3) assigns to the service of the daily burnt offerings the following weekly cycle of Psalms: On the first day the 24th; on the second day the 48th; on the third day the 82d; on the fourth day the 94th; on the fifth day the 81st; on the sixth day the 93d; on the seventh day the 92d.

The Septuagint Version by its titles to these Psalms, in the main, confirms this notice in the Mishna. The title to the Twenty-Fourth Psalm is "A Psalm of David on the first day of the week"; the title to the Forty-Eighth Psalm is "A Psalm of Praise for the Sons of Korah in the second day of the week"; and so on through the cycle, excepting only Psalms lxxxii. and lxxxiii. When one remembers that the Septuagint version of the Psalms was completed about 150 years B. C., and that these titles have stood over these Psalms from that date, one cannot doubt the testimony for this use of these Psalms. The superscription to the Ninety-Second Psalm in the Hebrew Bible is "A Psalm for the Sabbath-day."

The testimony of the Jewish Talmud and Mishna, of Maimonides, the great Jewish authority on the Talmud, of all Jewish writers on the temple service, and of Dr. Lightfoot, the great Protestant authority on the Talmud and Mishna, is to the effect that the Psalms were sung in connection with the temple service. It is true that we have not found mention made of all the Psalms as being used; but we have found reference to a large

number of them. These are mentioned as being stately sung on special occasions. Then when we remember that these selections were made from a praise-manual, we surely are justified in concluding that others of these songs were sung on ordinary occasions at the temple and in the homes of the people. Can anyone account for the Psalter on any other supposition? We conclude that the Psalms of the Psalter were sung in Old Testament worship.

V. The Psalms in the Service of the Synagogue. It is held that the mode of worship in the early Christian Church was modeled, in general, after the service of the synagogue. Were the Psalms sung in the service of the synagogue? Edersheim contends that there was no praise service whatever in connection with the synagogue. A few others take the same view.

Maimonides, Vitringa, Dr. Lightfoot, Ginsburg, The Encyclopedia Biblica, and Cheyne, all of whom are of much higher authority, claim that songs of praise were sung in the service of the synagogue. Our information concerning the origin and the early history of the synagogue is meager indeed. We do not know how and when it originated, though we can with much assurance conjecture.

There is no direct statement that there was any singing of praise in its service. Some have held that this lack of positive statement is conclusive that praise formed no part of the service. But when we recall what a prominent place the chanting of Psalms held in the service of the temple, when we recall that praise became a part of the worship of the Christian Church from the very first, and when we recall that Jews, who had all their lives been accustomed to worship in the synagogue, were so familiar with the Psalms that in the mid-night darkness of the prison Paul and Silas sang praises to God, we can scarcely conceive that this prominent and popular part of worship was wholly omitted from the service of the synagogue.

The Mishna, as quoted in The Encyclopedia Biblica, enumerates five principal parts of the service of the synagogue: (a)

the recital of the Shema, *i. e.*, certain parts of the Pentateuch, viz., Deut. vi. 4-9; xi. 13-21; and Num. xv. 37-41; (b) the prayer; (c) the reading of the law; (d) the reading of the prophets, and the benediction; (e) the translation and explanation of the Scripture lesson. There is no mention made of the singing of songs of praise. But there is strong ground for saying that praise was included under "the prayer." There is such a close connection between prayer and praise that they could easily go under one name. Prayer includes the giving of thanks to God. Praise may include confession and petition, as well as the giving of thanks. I. J. Perritz in *The Encyclopedia Biblica*, writing on the service of the Early Church, says: "Paul speaks of prayer and praise together (1 Cor. xiv. 14, 15): 'I will pray'; 'I will sing.' This would be the natural combination in the very earliest liturgical arrangement. . . . From the fact, however, that 'Psalm' is mentioned alone in the 26th verse, we may well infer with Weizsäcker that the song of praise was, as a rule, more prominent than prayer." Weizsäcker in his great work on "The Apostolic Church" takes this view. "Tephillah" (prayer) can include "tehillah" (praise). That the Hebrew word "tephillah" is so used in the Bible the following passages will show: 1 Sam. ii. 1: "And Hannah prayed and said," etc. Then follows a magnificent song of praise. Jonah ii. 1: "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly and said," etc. What follows is a hymn of thanksgiving. The headings in Hebrew to Psalms xvii., lxxxvi., xc., cxlii., and also to the song in Habakkuk iii. are "tephillah" (prayer), not "tehillah" (song). The Bible writers frequently use the word for prayer as inclusive of praise. We believe that the Talmud, in giving the order of service for the synagogue, intended "prayer" to include "praise." Cheyne, in the *Bampton Lectures*, 1889, expresses this same belief: "It may be objected," he says, "that there is no evidence that Psalmody formed part of the public worship in the early synagogue. But they were at any rate prayer-houses like the temple, and I can with difficulty

believe that prayer did not include praise; especially as the missionary Psalms contain passages specially appropriate to the Diaspora." The *Encyclopedia Biblica* has a statement of this same thought, and in almost identical words. Dr. James Harper, of Xenia, Ohio, says: "For many hundreds of years the singing or chanting which Maimonides includes under the general head of prayer has been an element in the synagogue service." Note that Maimonides is Dr. Harper's authority for this statement. Killen, in his "Early Christian Church," says: "Like the worship of the synagogue, the New Testament service consisted of prayer, singing, reading the Scripture, and expounding or preaching." Binnie, in his great work on "The Psalms, Their History, Teaching, and Use," has this to say: "The worship of the Christian Church was for the most part borrowed from the synagogue. . . . In addition, therefore, to the reading and preaching of the Word, and the offering of united prayer, the singing of Psalms was in use from the beginning." Speaking of the common prayers of the Early Church, Burbidge, in his book entitled "The Liturgies and Offices of the Church," says: "The resemblances of these services to the synagogue worship can be clearly traced, as might be expected when it is remembered that for many years the Church consisted principally of Jews. . . . Praise, hearing, and prayer formed the main divisions of the common prayers of the Christians, as they had done in the synagogue services of the Jews."

This is a strong array of testimony for the ordinance of praise in the synagogue:

(a) The Bible use of "prayer" and "praise"—the one including the other, showing that "prayer" in the order of service for the synagogue might include "praise";

(b) Maimonides' assertion that "prayer" included "praise" in the synagogue service;

(c) The New Testament worship, modeled after the synagogue, including from the first the singing of Psalms;

(d) The claim of Cheyne, Vitringa, Dr. Lightfoot, The Ency-



lopedia Biblica, Binnie, Killen, Harper, Burbidge, and almost all other authorities, that the "prayer" of the synagogue service included praise.

Now, since they sang praises in the services of the synagogues, what did they sing? The Jews sang Psalms in the temple service. The Jews who were converted to Christianity, modeling their service after the synagogue, sang Psalms. The Jews were familiar with the Psalms. What did the Jews sing in their synagogue service? The Psalms were the songs sung in the temple service. The Psalms were the songs sung in the synagogue service. The Psalms were the songs sung in the service of the early Christian Church.

VI. The time of the closing of the Psalter indicates that it was intended, not for the Old Testament Church alone, but for permanent use. There are various views held as to the date when the Psalter was closed. In the Seventy-Fourth Psalm there is a lament that the enemy has burned up all the synagogues of the land. As the synagogues were a post-exilic institution, as the institution was a matter of growth, and probably of slow growth, we may conclude that the Seventy-Fourth Psalm was written long after the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Because of the fact that the persecutions of the Maccabean times make the best background for this Psalm, as for several other Psalms, some make the date of this Psalm to be as late as 164 B. C. John Calvin inclines to this view. According to such a view, the Psalter could not have been closed earlier than 150 B. C. At the earliest, the completed Psalter was not given till very late in the Old Testament dispensation. The late date at which many of the Psalms were written, and the later date at which the manual was compiled, viz., after most of the Old Testament dispensation had passed away, leads one to conclude that the Psalter was prepared not alone for the little remnant of the Old Testament dispensation, but for all time.

VII. An objection answered. It is said that other songs than those contained in the Hebrew Psalter were sung in temple

and in synagogue services. The late Dr. Edgar, of Belfast, in his little book, "Progressive Presbyterianism," Prof. Heron, in "The Belfast Witness," and Dr. D. F. Bonner, in the columns of "The Westminster" (Philadelphia), make much of this objection. They seem to attempt to make the impression that there was much of this extra-Psalter material used in the Old Testament Church. But when one takes his pencil and puts down all which any and all of them cite, he is surprised at the meagerness of the material over which they make so much. Here is the sum of their findings. On the Sabbath days, the two songs of Moses, contained respectively in Deuteronomy xxxii. and in Exodus xv., were chanted in addition to the Psalm service of the day. On this point Dr. Lightfoot, in his "Temple Service," says: "On the Sabbaths themselves there was an additional sacrifice, according to the appointment. Num. xxviii. 9, 10. And at the time of this additional sacrifice the Levites sang Moses' song, in Deut. xxxii., 'Hear, O heavens, and I will speak,' etc., but they sang it not all at one time, but divided it into six parts, and sang one part of it every Sabbath; and so in six Sabbath days they finished it, and began again. Thus did they at the additional morning sacrifice; and, at the evening sacrifice, they sang Moses' song in Exodus xv." This Dr. Lightfoot gives on the authority of Maimonides, in *Tamid*, cap. 6. The song of Habakkuk also was probably sung. This we infer from the superscription, though there is no account, either in Scripture or in the Talmud and Mishna, of its having been sung. Prof. Heron claims the songs of Hezekiah were sung. This claim is based on a line contained in Hezekiah's song of thanksgiving composed on the occasion of his recovery from sickness:

"Jehovah is ready to save me:

Therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments  
All the days of our life in the house of Jehovah."

(Isa. xxxviii. 20, R. V.)

The Hebrew word here rendered "sing," wherever it occurs

in the Bible, except three times, is translated "stringed instruments." The word rendered "we will sing" should be rendered "we will strike"; Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon gives no other meaning for it. The verse is properly translated:

"Jehovah is ready to save me:

Therefore my stringed instruments we will strike  
All the days of my life in the house of Jehovah."

Cheyne, Delitzsch, George Adam Smith, Orelli, Blake, the Cambridge Bible, the Encyclopedia Biblica, and, indeed, all modern commentators translate the verse as I have given it. Prof. Heron's argument is based on what is certainly a mistranslation of this verse.

Dr. Edgar gives eight extra-Biblical lines which he claims were sung as a doxology on the Day of Atonement. Dr. Edersheim quotes eleven extra-Biblical lines which he claims were sung in the temple service.

It is significant that the evidence for the use of these nineteen lines of extra-Biblical material in the song service of the temple is so precarious that the great authorities refuse to make claim for their use. Dr. Lightfoot, the great authority on the temple service, says not a word about them in his monumental work, "The Temple Service," though he set for himself the task of giving all that was connected with the subject, writing a book of more than two hundred pages on the subject, quoting the Talmud and Mishna, Maimonides, and all the Jewish authorities with great accuracy and fulness.

Now what have we, on good authority, as having been sung in the service of the temple in addition to the Psalms? The two songs of Moses, and probably the song of Habakkuk—all three of them inspired material, and all found in the Bible. How much basis this little mite for the making of hymn-books of human composition for use in the worship of God! There might have been a dozen other inspired songs sung in the temple without

affecting our position in the least. These songs of Moses and Habakkuk were inspired songs. Our claim is for an inspired Psalmody. We are not averse to the singing of inspired songs wherever found, such as the songs of Moses. We do not believe that they will ever be sung. The singing of inspired songs other than the Psalms has never been a practical question. It will never be a practical question, for there are less than a score of such songs in the entire Bible that could be sung. The raising of this question of the singing of inspired songs other than those found in the Psalter has always been a mere quibble. Those who have raised it have never attempted to have them sung. They have never desired to have them sung.

Then the fact that from all the songs prepared by inspired men in Old Testament times one hundred and fifty were selected to form a manual of praise is indicative of the fact that divine wisdom has been exercised in the selection. This is significant. The Psalms were gathered into a book for the express purpose of making a manual of praise for use in the public and private worship of God. Everyone, so far as I have ever heard, who believes in an inspired Psalmody is perfectly satisfied with the selection that has been made by divine wisdom. Moses, Hannah, Habakkuk, Jonah, Hezekiah, and others wrote songs, which for historical reasons were retained in their historical place in the Canon, but which were omitted from the permanent praise book of the Church for reasons which seemed good to the divine mind. Doubtless other inspired songs were written and, possibly, for a time sung by the Old Testament Church. For reasons which seemed good to divine wisdom these songs, if there were any, were omitted from both the Psalter and the Canon. Paul wrote epistles to the churches. All of these were inspired. Many of them have been included in the New Testament for permanent use. Others were not included, and are lost, this for reasons which seemed good to a superintending Providence. There are twenty-seven lost books quoted in one or other of the thirty-nine Old Testament books. Doubtless some of these were inspired,

but none of these twenty-seven books were included in the Bible, for reasons which seemed good to the Holy Ghost. Habakkuk, doubtless, uttered other prophecies than those contained in his three chapters, and Obadiah others than those contained in the twenty-one verses in his one-chaptered book; but they are not bound up in the Bible. The fact that other Old Testament books and other of Paul's inspired epistles were once used by the Church, but are not now in the Bible, gives the Church no sanction for making new books of Scripture. The fact that other inspired songs were once made, and possibly sung, gives the Church no authority to make other songs as substitutes for the Psalms of the Psalter.

VIII. Another objection answered. Many hymns, it is said, were written during the century preceding the coming of Christ, and during His and the Apostolic days, which may well be used in the praise service. "The Psalms of Solomon," a collection of eighteen psalms, and "The Songs of the Three Children" embodied in the Septuagint version of Daniel are cited as illustrations of this. It is said that the writing of psalms and hymns and songs after the Old Testament Canon was closed is proof that the Church may use them, and that she may write others for use. After the Old Testament Canon was closed there were many books written in the style of the Scriptures. First and Second Esdras, Tobit, Judith, additions to Esther, the Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, First, Second, Third, and Fourth Maccabees, Enoch, etc., etc., are all of this type. They are religious books; they are similar in their contents to the books of the Bible; some of them are bound up in the Septuagint; and some of them are still in the Vulgate. But Protestants do not agree that they shall be used in our pulpits as Sacred Scripture. The same argument that would take the "Psalms of Solomon" and other hymns into the praise service of the Church would take all these apocryphal books into the reading service of the Church.

IX. A third objection answered. New conditions arise for

which new songs must be made. This objection is based on the assumption that the hymn is an outburst of devotion produced at the moment of some great event. This is far from the truth. The hymns which are enduring are not the outburst of the moment. They are the embodiment of the sentiment of the Church. They follow settled convictions. The enduring hymns, which are the only ones worth singing at any time, are the ripest product of human thought. They cannot be produced to order, nor on the spur of the moment. Consequently no hymns of permanent value are prepared for particular occasions and conditions. When new conditions arise, the hymn-singing Churches sing the old hymns which have been tested by use.

X. A fourth objection answered. Since we have freedom in making prayers, we should have freedom in making hymns. The cases are far from parallel. Prayer is offered by one man as leader; hymns are sung by the congregation. The leader may extemporize a prayer; a congregation cannot extemporize a hymn. Even when a hymn is sung in solo, it is impossible for the singer to compose his words at the time of singing. In the denominations which have a ritual for prayer, even the prayers have been prepared most carefully beforehand. They are the selection of the best prayer-thought of a century or more. It is impossible that the congregation, or the leader of song, should have the same liberty in the matter of hymns that is had in prayer. The hymns must be prepared beforehand, set to music, and the music learned. Prayer is the spontaneous utterance of the leader's heart; congregational singing is praise to God through words which have been prepared beforehand, and usually long beforehand.

#### XI. Recapitulation.

1. The Psalms are inspired.
2. The Psalms were prepared to be sung.
3. Songs of praise were sung in Old Testament worship.
4. The songs which were sung in temple and synagogue were the songs of the Psalter.

5. By divine guidance the Psalter was prepared as a praise manual.

6. The collection of Psalms found in the Psalter was made so very late in the Old Testament dispensation that the idea that it was made for the Old Testament Church only is precluded.

7. The objections urged against the exclusive use of the Psalms in the worship of God are not well taken.

## THE PSALMS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT CHURCH

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**T**HE Psalter as we have it to-day existed thus for at least two hundred, and probably four hundred, years before the birth of Christ, and the major part of it, unless we fall into the vortex of rationalistic criticism, we have substantial reason to believe was the song-book of God's people from the time of David. It stands out from the rest of the Old Testament separate and unique. In contrast with the other sacred books it is not a continuous composition, but is a collection of one hundred and fifty sacred lyrical odes. Neither is it the production of a single author, but a collection of songs from many gifted singers. It had its origin among the people of God, and bears the impress of their national and religious life from the days of Moses until the return from Chaldea.

From the Word of God we gather that in the early days of the Jewish Church song did not have the prominent place it held in later times, but it would be a mistake to conclude from this that the people of God did not as individuals and as a congregation engage in praise to Him Who brought them, as a vine, out of Egypt, and planted them in the promised land. The songs of Moses and Miriam, of Deborah and Hannah, together with the indications that the books of "Jasher" and the "Wars of the Lord" were poetical productions, teach that from their earliest national existence the Jews were a people possessed of high poetic genius; and doubtless these people who had so much reason for gratitude and devotion to God would express the emotions of their hearts to Him in songs of praise. Not to do so would be to fall below the devotional practices of the heathen who celebrated the praises of their deities in song.



The relation of the Israelites to Jehovah and the untold favors and blessings they received from Him would warrant the conclusion that they were possessed of the spirit of praise, and the remnants of song preserved in the inspired Word of that olden time is indisputable evidence that they were possessed of the poetic faculty in a high degree, and that they used sacred songs to express their devotion and gratitude to their divine Lord. To what extent, and in what manner they thus praised Him, we are unable to determine; we have evidence of the fact, but know not its extent. Not until the reign of David are we assured there was an established order of public praise service and a manual of praise in Israel. The probability is that prior to that time there was none. The development of the Jewish Church and the enlargement of her privileges and duties were a growth, not a sudden outburst. As the established order of sacrifice was foreshadowed long before God by the hand of Moses gave the elaborate ritual set forth in the Pentateuch, so there were intimations of the Psalter long before God raised up David and the other sweet singers to provide and establish a service of song.

David sustained much the same relation to the song service of the Church that Moses did to the service of sacrifice. When God constituted Israel a church and nation at the base of Sinai and made Moses her earthly ruler and law-giver, He thus instituted an order of national life and service that continued without enlargement until the introduction of the royal covenant with David, the royal antitype of Christ upon the throne. Naturally David was no ordinary man; the strength and extent of his natural abilities were beyond the ordinary, but that which was most extraordinary was the official and typical position to which he was elevated. When the time had come, and circumstances demanded a new order of things in Israel, God raised up David, a man after His own heart, that is, a man of His own choice, who would fulfill all His will. Not more distinctly was Moses called and set apart by God for the place he occupied and the service he rendered than was David "raised up on high the anointed of

the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel." Hence the command to Samuel, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he."

David was not the successor of Saul. It is true he followed Saul in the government of Israel, but David had no predecessor; he was the first of a new order and a new line. Saul was on the throne by the rebellion and usurpation of the people who had rejected God and His order. David was there in virtue of a divine call and a royal covenant. Henceforth the people of Israel stand in a new relation to God, and an enlarged order of things is experienced, both politically and ecclesiastically. For the inauguration of this new and enlarged order David is authorized and qualified by the Spirit of God, for from the day of his anointing the Spirit of God was upon him, and divinely inspired prophets were his counselors. As well as being a prophet himself, he had the direction of God by the hand of Nathan, Gad, and others.

David's work as king of Israel was politically to organize a royal government, drive out Israel's enemies, and acquire full possession of the promised land. This he did so thoroughly that when Solomon began his reign he had "rest on every side, so that there was neither adversary nor evil occurrent," "and he had dominion over all the region on this side the river, from Tiphshah even unto Azzah, over all the kings on this side of the river." However great and successful this political work was, he had a greater work to do. The religion of Jehovah was in a deplorable state. After all the efforts of Samuel to revive the religious spirit, the Ark of God had not been restored and the worship of Jehovah was woefully neglected. As soon as David was firmly seated on the throne of all Israel, he set to work to revive and reconstruct the religious services of the Church. Here his initial work was to recover the Ark and establish a place for its abode. Like Moses in delivering Israel, his first attempt was a failure, for he presumed to fetch it up in his own way, and contrary to the express directions given for handling the sacred vessel. Before he attempted its removal a second time he made careful

and extensive preparation, and in this attempt he was successful, for he had the divine approval. This was an imposing ceremony and the day was great in Israel, for David had gathered all Israel together from Sihor in Egypt to the entering in of Hamath, "and David and all Israel played before God with all their might, with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets." This is the first public service of song and musical accompaniment recorded in the Word of God, and it meets with the divine approval, for David was authorized by God to bring up the Ark, and there was no breach on account of unhallowed service.

After this service rendered in bringing up the Ark, which seems to have been only temporary, David instituted a permanent establishment of song service accompanied with instruments. When the Ark had been set in the midst of the tent which David had pitched for it, "he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the Ark of the Lord, and to record and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel." At the same time he revived the sacrificial service upon the altar of burnt sacrifice at Gibeon, and connected therewith the newly instituted ordinance of praise. And it is recorded that "on that day did David first ordain to give thanks unto Jehovah, by the hand of Asaph and his brethren."

Let us now notice the official appointment for this service. It was from the divinely established order of ministers, the Levites, and from each of the three families of that order. The chief of the singers with his brethren was Heman, of the family of Kohath, the family of Moses and Aaron. On his right hand stood Asaph, of the family of Gershon, with his brethren, and on his left hand Ethan, also called Jeduthun, with his brethren. In this official appointment the order of prominence was the same as Moses arranged for the previous services of the tabernacle. The continued existence of this official choir and the performance of its duties are distinctly traceable from David through the Pre-Exile period, during the Exile, and until the reestablishment of religious service after the return from the captivity, and, by

references in the Old Testament Apocrypha, to a much later period.

The supreme purpose of this body of singers was to offer the sacrifice of praise to God in conjunction with the offerings of slain beasts—to offer “the calves of the lips” in conjunction with the “calves of the stall.” The position is taken by some that this institution was largely instrumental—a magnificent musical display. This would be to give the less important the higher distinction, which statement carries with it its own condemnation. And, besides, the Word is very explicit in giving song the supreme place; instrumentation was only an accompaniment.

The question arises, Whence the origin of the songs sung in praise to God by this body of divinely appointed singers. For all other parts of God’s worship there were divine appointment and authorization. The sacrifices and other offerings were divinely designated as to kind, quality, and manner of presentation. Those who offered them could do so only after complying with divinely specified conditions, and the priests who presented these offerings to God officiated by virtue of divine appointment. If the things offered or the persons offering or officiating were not in accordance with divine regulation they were rejected by God with awful tokens of His displeasure. Witness Miriam’s leprous hand, Nadab’s and Abihu’s violent death, Korah’s living grave, and the dire result of Uzzah’s unhallowed touch. By inference the conclusion must be reached that songs of praise to be acceptable must be chosen and authorized by God, that is, be God-inspired and God-appointed. But we have more direct evidence for this conclusion than inference. David, who composed, perhaps, more than half, certainly a very large portion, of the Psalter, declared that he spoke by the Spirit of God, and that the Lord’s word was in his tongue. On the day of Pentecost when Peter applied the Sixteenth Psalm to Christ, he said that David being a prophet foresaw this, and spake of the resurrection of Christ. In Acts i. 16 Peter says, “Men and brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled which the Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of

David." Our Saviour, quoting from the One Hundred and Tenth Psalm, declared that David spake by the Holy Ghost. Heman, the chief of the singers, is called the king's seer in the words of God, and Asaph and Ethan were seers who prophesied in song.

A further question now arises: Are the songs of the Psalter the inspired songs sung by this divinely appointed company of singers? As already seen, these persons were set apart for the special purpose of conducting the praise part of God's worship, and were divinely inspired to produce, secure, and cultivate matter of praise. The large number of trained singers who took part in the service, together with the congregational singing which frequently, if not always, accompanied the choir, rendered a song manual necessary. The existence of such a manual is constantly implied from the time of David, and in 2 Chron. xxix. 30 its existence is asserted, for "Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph the seer."

That the Psalter we have to-day is the efflorescence of the divinely instituted order of praise there can be no reasonable doubt. Its place in the sacred Canon and its recognition in the New Testament guarantee its inspiration; the structure of the Book and the lyric structure of its odes unmistakably declare it a manual of song; and its spiritual sweep and the sublime sentiment of its matter proclaim its purpose of praise to Almighty God. There is not a requirement of the divinely established order of praise, as revealed in the Word, into which the Psalter does not fit with minute exactness. There is not a musical requirement that it does not meet; there is not an emotion of the soul that it does not express; and there is not an attribute of the Almighty as revealed to man that is not made the embodiment of adoration and the basis of supplication.

Not only does the Psalter fit every requirement of the praise service of the Old Testament Church, but it does so to the exclusion of all other songs. In all the history of the Jews, both

sacred and profane, there is not the slightest trace of any other body of praise. It is true there are songs found in the Mishna and Talmud which purport to have been used by the Jews in their praise service, but there is no good evidence that these are earlier than the days of Christ, and even if they were earlier than His day and were used in connection with the Psalms, or even to their exclusion, their absence from the inspired Book is their condemnation. They are to be classed with the sacrifices offered in the days of the prophet Malachi, when they placed polluted bread upon God's altar, and offered the torn and the lame and the sick for sacrifice. They are to be placed on a level with the traditions which received the severe condemnation of Christ because they made void the Law. These so-called songs of the Talmudic books compared to the songs of the Psalter are as the torn and the lame and the sick compared to the unblemished sacrificial lamb that God ordained.

There is reason to believe that divine guidance extended not only to the composition of the songs of the Psalter, but also to their collection. We hold the Psalter to be inspired as to every song, that there cannot be a single uninspired ode within its number. To accomplish this result required divine guidance. Admit that the Psalter is wholly inspired, and there is no escape from the conclusion that its collection was supervised unerringly by God. What is excluded from the Psalter is evidence of this, as well as what is included. In the inscriptions of the Psalms there are two ascribed to Solomon. That these are Solomon's is denied by some of the critics, but others who are equally scholarly say there is no good reason to call their Solomonic authorship in question. If they are genuine, then the care of selection is manifest, for Solomon wrote one thousand and five songs; yet out of all the number two only are selected for a place in the Psalter. At any rate, out of all the songs of Israel, numerous as they doubtless were, only one hundred and fifty appear in the sacred manual.

Again, the evidence of divine guidance appears from the fact

that there are some inspired songs in the Old Testament that do not find a place in the Psalter. The songs of Moses, Deborah, Hannah, and Habakkuk are songs of praise to God, yet they are not included in the volume of sacred song. If this were an oversight, then erring men compiled the Psalter, and if they erred in the omission, we have no assurance they did not err in making the collection, and consequently confidence in the inspiration of the Psalter is wrecked. If they did not err, then it follows that something more is needed than the inspiration of a song to entitle it to a place in the Psalter; it must have divine appointment.

The great design of this divinely appointed and magnificently arranged order of service was the worship of Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel. The inspired songs that were exclusively used brought home to the heart of the Israelite the deep significance of the sacrificial service and sealed it there, and were also a vehicle by which the heart of the worshiper might convey its adoration, confession, supplication, and thanksgiving to Almighty God. When David first established the order of praise before the Ark of the Lord at Jerusalem, and at the altar of burnt sacrifice at Gibeon, it was "to record and thank and praise the Lord God of Israel." It was for this purpose the order was raised up, and so at every mention of their service the statement is made that they "praised the Lord God of Israel." Moreover, the relation of this service to the service of sacrifice bears witness to the fact that it was an element of worship. From the time of David onward the service of song was an essential part of all public worship. It was associated with the regular morning and evening sacrifice; it was an elaborate part of the great congregational worship on the occasion of the annual feasts; and in times of reformation, when godly kings and priests sought to overthrow and eradicate encroaching idolatry, and reestablish the worship of Jehovah, the spiritual efficiency of this part of divine service is manifest from the use made of it and the blessed results achieved. After the dethronement of the wicked Athaliah, when Jehoiada

the priest, the king, and the people made covenant that "they should be the Lord's people," and went forth to break down the altars of Baal and recover the worship of Jehovah, they associated the service of song as ordained by David with the service of sacrifice. A century later, when Hezekiah instituted his reform, "he set the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet, for so was the commandment of the Lord by His prophets." "And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began, and all the congregation worshiped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded, and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished." "Moreover, Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David and Asaph the seer." "And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshiped." Again, in the days of good Josiah, when he instituted his magnificent reform, he associated the service of song with the offering of burnt sacrifice. And when the faithful had returned from captivity and had set up the altar of burnt offering and laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, "they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets and the Levites with cymbals to praise the Lord after the ordinance of David king of Israel. And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord."

In the Psalms themselves the purpose of praise is unmistakably set forth. *First.* This appears in their structure, which is lyrical poetry, the form of poesy specifically adapted to musical rendition. *Second.* Their design is exhibited in the numerous declarations they contain exhibiting the duty and fitness of praise: "Praise ye the Lord, for it is good to sing praise unto our God." "Praise God in the sanctuary." "Sing aloud unto God our strength; make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. Take a Psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery. Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time



appointed, on our solemn feast day. For this was a statute in Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob." *Third.* The subject matter and the devotional element of the Psalms proclaim unmistakably that they were designed for worship. They abound with adoration of the Most High God. There is not an attribute of Jehovah revealed in the entire Word that is not herein embodied in ascriptions of praise. "Great is our God, and of great power; His understanding is infinite." "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works." "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up to heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me." By the Psalms not only is the infinite God adored, but the heart of the worshiper is furnished with a medium whereby it can pour into the ear of Infinite Mercy its contrite confession, its earnest supplication, and its sincere thanksgiving with strains beyond its own power of utterance, for the Spirit Who "helpeth our infirmities" and reveals to man "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" has given these songs to men that they may worship God, "Who is a spirit, in spirit and in truth."

A further question claims our attention, viz., On what occasions and to what extent did the Jews employ the songs of this divinely provided and authorized manual of praise in their worship of Jehovah? In the Word of God the evidence covering this question is not very abundant; yet it is sufficient to indicate that they were extensively used. As the presence of genuine vestigia are indubitable evidence of a track-maker and the course he pursued, so the occasional mention of the use of the Psalms in the Bible proves their existence and the manner of their employment. Oftentimes incidental references are stronger evidence than elaborate mention, and we believe it to be so in this case. Going upon this ground we have reason to conclude that on all occasions of formal public worship the ordinance of praise as provided for in

the Psalter constituted an important part of the service. That it was used in connection with the regular morning and evening sacrifice, see 1 Chron. xvi. 37-42; xxiii. 24-32, and that it was used at the set feasts, see 1 Chron. xxiii. 31. On that greatest of all days, both politically and religiously, in the history of the Jewish people, when the temple was dedicated, the entire force of musicians and singers, arrayed in white linen, joined in unison "in praising the Lord," saying, "For He is good, for His mercy endures forever."

On one occasion, at least, the Psalter furnished the battle song of Israel's hosts, as in the name of the Lord they went forth against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir in the days of Jehoshaphat. On a former occasion Israel presumed to carry the Ark of Jehovah into battle, hoping by its presence to gain a victory, but they suffered a signal defeat for their rashness. On this occasion, however, singing the praises of the God of battles under the direction of the prophet, they are victorious without a stroke, for when they began to sing Jehovah set liers-in-wait against the enemy, and they were smitten before Jehoshaphat and his army arrived on the field of battle.

As already mentioned, the songs of the Psalter were used in times of revival in connection with the appointed sacrifices. See 2 Chron. xxiii. 13-18; xxix. 23-35; xxxv. 15, 16.

To conclude that this service of song was confined to the public service at the temple and to special public occasions would be to mistake the whole purpose of the order of worship. That this service had its headquarters at the temple is a fact growing out of the very constitution of Israel's religious service and an important intention thereof, which was centralization both religious and political; but it is contrary to the very nature of the service and the intimations of the Word of God to suppose His worship was wholly embraced in the temple service and terminated with it. The action of our Saviour and His disciples when they sung a hymn at the last Passover indicates unmistakably that families joined the service of song with the celebration of the

feast. And surely the use of these Psalms, so suitable for individual and family devotion, and social worship as well, would not terminate with the public service at Jerusalem. First the tabernacle and later the temple at Jerusalem were the fountain whence flowed rivers of living water to the extremities of the Holy Land, making glad the people of God. The devotional spirit quickened into newness of life at the fountain of service would pour itself forth in the language of inspired song in the social meeting for praise, at the family altar, and in the hallowed seclusion of private devotion. If this were not the fact, whence the origin of Ezekiel's vision of the mighty river, or of Zechariah's living waters flowing east and west from Jerusalem, or John's river of water of life proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb?

In conclusion let it be noticed, first, that while the public service of song was under the management of the Levites, and was employed in connection with the ceremonial worship ordained by the hand of Moses, there is nothing ceremonial to be found in the Psalter. It is as devoid of everything ceremonial as is the Moral Law. Even the instrumentation had no connection with the service of sacrifice. In very few instances is the ceremony of sacrifice mentioned in the Psalms, and then only to emphasize the spiritual principle underlying it. The unceremonial tone of the Psalter is expressed in the Sixty-Ninth Psalm: "I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving. And it will please Jehovah better than an ox, or a bullock that hath horns and hoofs."

Second, let it be noted that the service of song embracing the Psalter is in its appointment Messianic. David, the author of a large portion of the Psalter and the divinely authorized founder of praise as an ordinance of worship, is in a sense Messianic. He is at once the royal ancestor and the royal predecessor of Christ. The nation and Church of Israel became more and more manifestly Messianic as the centuries of its history rolled onward. This is true not only of its evangelical prophecies, but of its national and ecclesiastical constitution. David the king is the

first of the royal line terminating in King Messiah, and the kingdom divinely organized with David upon the throne is the kingdom developed over which Christ reigns and will reign forever. This is the truth spoken by the angel to Mary: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end." The songs of the Old Testament Church are the songs of this Kingdom. Like the Sermon on the Mount, they open with the blessedness of the godly man, and they close with repeated Hallelujahs, "for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

## THE PSALMS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

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**T**HE Manual of Praise in the worship of God used by the Congregation of Israel for centuries was the Book of Psalms. The arrangement of these songs in the order in which they have descended to us dates probably from the erection of the second Temple, or soon thereafter. For some five hundred years, *i. e.*, from Ezra to Christ, the people of God employed the Psalms in divine worship. In the Temple, in the Synagogue, and in the home, pious Israelites lifted up their voices in thanksgiving and praise in the tuneful words which Jehovah Himself had provided. The Books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah attest how zealously the returned exiles reëstablished the Lord's ordinances, and how joyfully they served Him in the songs of the sanctuary. We are assured that they "sang praise and gave thanks according to the commandment of David the man of God" (Neh. xii. 24, 45-47). We have good reason to believe that the Psalter was used exclusively in worship by the Jews from the restoration from Babylon down to the opening of the Christian era.

There is clear evidence that the Psalter passed from the service of the Temple and of the Synagogue into the service of the Christian Church at its organization, and that it was used by Christians as their book of praise during the course of the Apostolic age—approximately from 30 A. D. to 100 A. D. It is the chief aim of this paper to discuss the evidences in support of this proposition, *viz.*, that the Psalms formed the manual of praise employed by the Christian Church during the Apostolic age. Within the limits to which it must needs be confined, only what

is deemed most essential in proof and illustration of the theme is here set down.

I. The marvelous adaptation of the Psalms to the needs and the uses of the Christian dispensation is indirect proof that the Apostolic Church employed them as its manual of praise. The first members of the Church were Jews who with their whole hearts had accepted Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, their Saviour and Lord. Among them were the Apostles, who accompanied with Him during His ministry and who were witnesses of His resurrection. Among them were Mary, His mother, and His "brethren," members of the family of Joseph, and the disciples. All their lives they had been familiar with Psalms, had sung them in the worship of Jehovah in the Temple and the Synagogue; they knew something of their Messianic teaching, but the full significance of them burst upon them only when the Lord had opened their understanding to understand the Scriptures, and when they had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Moreover, the Lord Jesus had sung with them a "hymn" on the night He instituted His Supper (Matt. xxvi. 30). It is not told us what hymn it was, but beyond peradventure it was the Paschal Hymn of the Psalter, as anything else would have been unwarranted innovation. There is valid foundation for the older Lightfoot's striking words: "He Who could have inspired every disciple to have been a David sings the Psalms of David." In the first Christian sermon ever preached, that of Peter (Acts ii.), the main doctrine taught rests on the interpretation of two Psalms, the Sixteenth and the One Hundred and Tenth. In Paul's first recorded discourse (Acts xiii.), the effective appeal is made likewise to two Psalms, the Second and the Sixteenth. Hebrews also is filled with arguments drawn largely from the Psalms as to the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the first chapter of that Epistle there are seven quotations from the Old Testament, and six of them are taken from the Psalms. Obviously, Apostolic teachers had no difficulty in finding Jesus as Messiah in the Psalter; they saw in it not only predictions of

His advent, but likewise they saw in it the main features of His mission, His mediatorial offices, His death, resurrection, and exaltation, His kingdom and its glory, His people and their blessedness. In their hands the Psalter becomes essentially a Christian book. Nor is this to be wondered at. There is a comprehensiveness in it that removes it altogether from the sphere of the local and temporal, from being an exclusively Jewish hymnal, and that sets it in the place of universality. We need not delay to argue the point. The Book carries with it its own voucher. The first three Psalms of the collection form a kind of summary of the whole, and their themes are: (1) the Scriptures; (2) the Messiah; and (3) the believer's experiences—themes that belong to all time and to all peoples.

The early Church Fathers were not less assured of this universal character of the Psalter than are we. Let but one be cited in proof, Basil the Great (c. 330-379 A. D.): "Psalmody is the Church's voice. From hence may not everything be acquired? . . . Is there a blessing to be named which here resides not? The splendors of theology beam refulgent; Jesus is predicted; the resurrection is announced; judgment is proclaimed; the sword of vengeance is unsheathed; crowns of glory glitter; speakless mysteries astonish. All these are treasured up in the Book of Psalms as in a common treasury."

The New Testament Church found in the Psalms of Scripture what Findlay happily describes as an "instrument of wide compass strung and tuned for her use." She was not required to translate the Old Testament into Greek, for this had already been done for her in the version of the Seventy. She did not need to make hymns for God's worship, for these were ready to her hand. Nor was she obliged to compose melodies for her hymns, for she had the stately chant of the Temple and the rhythmic recitative of the Synagogue. Thus the Christian Church was provided with the Greek Bible which would serve her throughout the vast bounds of the Roman Empire, and with a hymnal that was adapted to the conditions and the needs of all peoples.

II. Did the Apostles and their fellow-Christians use exclusively the songs of the Bible in their service of God? This question at once raises the issue between those who are familiarly called Psalm-singers and Hymn-singers. A vast number of faithful Christians are persuaded that songs of praise other than the Psalms of the Bible were used in the Apostolic Church; a comparatively small body of believers are deeply persuaded that the one hundred and fifty hymns of Scripture alone were thus employed. Let it be ours dispassionately to study this question.

There is profound import in the fact that our Lord on the night He was betrayed sang with His Apostles the Hallel of the Passover (Pss. cxiii.-cxviii.). There is absolute truth in Binnie's statement: "This may be said to mark the point at which the Psalter passed over from the old dispensation into the new; for it accompanied the celebration of the new ordinance of the Lord's Supper as well as the celebration of the expiring Passover." It is thought the first half of the Hallel (Pss. cxiii.-cxv.) was sung at the beginning of the Paschal Supper, and the latter half at the close, when Jesus and His disciples went forth to the Mount of Olives (Matt. xxvi. 30). If this be so, how profoundly significant the Songs are! Psalms cxvi.-cxviii. 19 praise Jehovah for deliverance and redemption; they tell of the joy they have who know His saving goodness. But Psalm cxviii. 20-29 is Messianic; it predicts the Messiah's advent, rejection, exaltation; it celebrates His Day, the day of His resurrection, and it bids believers be "glad in it." It is the first day of the week that is meant, "the queen of days." Now, here is the fitting of the song with the historical situation, the matching of the hymn with Messiah's trial and triumph. Is it only a remarkable case of coincidence? It is far more; it is the matching together of prediction and fulfilment. "This is Jehovah's doing: it is marvelous in our eyes."

The Messianic application of these Psalms and the example of Jesus in singing them would very strongly incline Christians of that time to use them in their service of praise. That



they did this is more than likely, as it will be our endeavor to show.

The verb *to praise* occurs four times in the New Testament, and in three of these instances by universal admission it refers to the Book of Psalms. In two places the same event is denoted, viz., the last Passover observed by our Lord, when He and His company sang a hymn (praised) and went forth (Matt. xxvi. 30; Mark xiv. 26). The third is Heb. ii. 12—"In the midst of the church will I sing praise (hymn) unto Thee." It is a quotation from the Septuagint version of Psalm xxii. 22, and is designed to confirm the statement that Christ identifies Himself with His people, that He is not ashamed to call them brethren, even singing with them as one of themselves. He did this at the institution of the Supper, and He will gloriously do so in that glad future when He will joy over His people with singing (Zeph. iii. 17). The fourth text in which the term is found is Acts xvi. 25—Paul and Silas praying and singing praises (hymns) in the dungeon of Philippi. What were the hymns, or what was the hymn, they sang? The language is too indefinite to enable us certainly to determine, but some things can be confidently affirmed: (1) There were not two separate acts in their devotions, but one only. Literally translated, the passage reads thus: "and praying they hymned to God." Their song was a prayer and their prayer a song. (2) They were Christian Jews, and knew the Psalter by heart, at least much of it, and it seems fair to infer that they used one or more of the many Psalms and portions of Psalms so peculiarly adapted and intended for prisoners and sufferers. (3) They appear to have sung in unison, and therefore the matter employed must have been common to them; their song was prayer, and therefore the prayer must have been identical in petition. Prof. J. A. Alexander inclines to the view that they sang from the Psalter. Prof. Vincent in his "Word Studies" writes, "probably Psalms." Dr. David Brown affirms that "it is probable that it was portions of the Psalms," he thinks likely of the Great Hallel. Plumptre says that "the hymn may have been one of

the prayer-psalms of David." The evidence warrants no more than probability. But the probability approaches certainty if it is conceded that the missionaries used the same words in their prayer-song, for in such case it must have been a Psalm with which both were familiar.

In 1 Cor. xiv. 26 Paul writes, "each one of you hath a psalm" (R. V.). What is meant by this statement? (1) Obviously the "psalm" formed part of the worship of the assembly. (2) The exercise is joined with certain supernatural gifts, as "doctrine," "revelation," "tongue," "interpretation." (3) Its exercise was confined to the one to whom the gift was given; it was the rhythmical utterance of a single individual, and was in no proper sense that of the congregation. (4) It may have been a composition improvised at the time, in which case it was undoubtedly the product of the Holy Spirit, and therefore inspired. If, however, it was a poetical composition brought by one to the public assembly, as the term "psalm" seems to denote, then there is ground for the belief of Principal Edwards and Dr. Binnie that it was a Scripture Psalm duly selected and commented on by the one who brought it to the assembly. The practice appears to have continued in the worship of the Church, for Tertullian (c. 200 A. D.) in describing a Christian feast, perhaps the love-feast, says: "After the washing of hands . . . each is asked to stand forth and sing, as he can, a hymn to God, either one from the holy Scripture or one of his own composition" (Apol. 39). Whether it was one of the Bible Psalms or a psalm inspired at the time by the Spirit of God—His special gift to one of the Christian assembly—it was a divinely authorized and supernatural "Psalm." It was not congregational singing, but the exercise of an individual gift by the Spirit for testimony and edification, like that of "tongues" or "revelation."

The words of James, "Is any merry? Let him sing psalms" (v. 13), point almost certainly to the Book of Psalms. James addresses Christian Jews who before their conversion sang Psalms alone in the worship of God, and after it sang the same divine

songs, and neither he, a strict observer of the Law, nor his readers included aught else in their praise service.

Two other passages of vital importance in this discussion are Eph. v. 19 and Col. iii. 16—the injunction to “speak to one another” and to “teach one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” There are in this volume exegetical papers devoted entirely to a careful study of these texts, and hence no particular examination of them is here required. Let it suffice to note the following points: (1) Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs are not only authorized but enjoined in God’s worship. (2) These are to be sung, not merely read, whether responsively or otherwise. (3) Christians by them are to teach and admonish one another, a fact that implies that these compositions are both didactic and instructive, not only hortatory, for they contain the word or doctrine of Christ (Col. iii. 16). (4) The contention that the three descriptive terms, “psalms, hymns, spiritual songs,” are all found in the Greek translation of the Book of Psalms rests on solid ground. The Septuagint, the version referred to, has them repeatedly in the headings of Psalms, the first and last, viz., “psalms” and “songs,” even profusely, while the “hymn,” though not so frequent, occurs often. In Psalm lxxvi. all three terms appear in the superscription. It is noteworthy that ancient Church Fathers whose use of the Greek Bible was constant, and who in many cases probably were unacquainted with the Hebrew, speak of the Psalms as “hymns.” For example, Justin Martyr (c. 155 A. D.) quotes the words attached to Psalm lxxii. in the Septuagint thus: “The hymns of David the son of Jesse are ended” (Dial. Try. 130). Tertullian also mentions the custom in the Agapæ of singing a hymn from Scripture, no doubt a Psalm. Cassian, fifth century, calls a number of the Psalms “hymns.” Even Josephus, who probably like most Jews was familiar with Hebrew, speaks of the Psalms as “hymns” (Ant. xii. 3). The proof that the Psalter was used in the service of the Apostolic Church lies in these main facts: that our Lord and His disciples sang a hymn, *i. e.*, a Psalm, at

the institution of the Supper; that James exhorts the cheerful among Hebrew Christians to sing Psalms; and that the three descriptive words of Paul, viz., "psalms, hymns, spiritual songs," being all found in the Greek Psalter, at that time in universal use among Gentile Christians, may be reckoned justly as being included in the Psalms of the Bible. Thus the testimony of New Testament Scripture appears to support the view that in the worship of the Apostolic Church the Psalms were used.

III. The history of the primitive Church confirms this view. Conclusions alone, drawn from a pretty wide survey of the subject, are here presented. And, first, there is no positive evidence that hymns of human composition found a place in Christian worship during the first century. No such composition has been transmitted to later times, and no trace of such practice appears in any ecclesiastical history consulted. Indeed, what scanty fragments of that olden time remain bear witness rather against than for such use.

Moreover, church historians of recognized authority attest the same fact. Dr. Philip Schaff writes that the "Book of Psalms is the oldest Christian Hymn Book; inherited from the ancient covenant." "We have no religious song remaining from the period of persecution (first three centuries) except the song of Clement of Alexandria to the divine Logos—which, however, cannot be called a hymn, and probably never was intended for public use" (Art. pub. 1866, quoted by Binnie). Schaff thinks that it is likely the Morning and Evening Song in the Apostolic Constitutions were in early use; but, even if they were, the fact would prove nothing, for these writings are not older than the third century, one hundred years and more after the Apostolic Age. Prof. George P. Fisher, writing of the worship of the Apostolic Age, says: "The hymns were, some of them, sung by individuals (1 Cor. xiv. 26), and some by the whole assembly. Most of them were from the Psalter, but there were Christian hymns, fragments of which are found in the Epistles." But Dr. Fisher states that as late as the third century there was "some

opposition" to the hymns employed in worship (pp. 41, 121, Hist. Ch.). Schaff says: "The Councils of Laodicea (A. D. 360) and of Chalcedon (A. D. 451) prohibited the ecclesiastical use of all uninspired or private hymns" (quoted by Binnie). "The immortal Athanasius," as Gibbon calls him, and the great Latin Father, Augustine, appear to have used Psalms alone in the worship of the churches with which they were connected.

Pliny's letter to the Emperor Trajan is sometimes appealed to as proof that hymns other than Psalms were employed in worship by primitive Christians. This famous document was written from Bithynia, A. D. 112 (Ramsay), or A. D. 113 (Mommsen). The writer says that Christians were "wont on a fixed day to meet before daybreak and recite a hymn among themselves by turns to Christ as to God"—Dr. David Brown's translation. This statement is too indefinite to determine with certainty what was sung in those early morning meetings. It was a time of persecution, hence the caution of meeting before daybreak, probably on the first day of the week. It is certain from Justin Martyr and other ancient Fathers that believers from the earliest times used the Forty-Fifth and other Psalms as hymns of Christ; they held them to be so thoroughly Messianic that they applied them to the Lord Jesus as songs in His praise. Had those primitive Christians been asked to Whom they addressed their song, if they were singing one of the Messianic Psalms, they would surely have replied, "To the Son of God, our Messiah." Moreover, Pliny clearly intimates that their singing was responsive. This manner of singing was carried over from the Synagogue into the Church in earliest times. It seems to have been universal in Asia Minor, and so far as is known was employed exclusively in the rendition of the Psalms of Scripture. Long after this period responsive singing was introduced by Ambrose into the church of Milan, and the Psalms thus rendered profoundly impressed Augustine. Psalms and their responsive rendition seem inseparably associated. No other composition of a poetical nature was so rendered for a considerable period subsequent to the Apostolic Age. Psalms

alone were responsively sung in primitive times in the Church, just as they were in the synagogues of Israel.

We may sum up the evidence from history thus: there is absolutely no decisive proof that uninspired hymns were sung by the Apostles and believers of their age. The evidence is abundant that the Psalms were in constant and universal use throughout the Church. The Psalter reigned supreme in that age.

IV. Are there traces of hymns in the Epistles? It is affirmed with much positiveness that there are fragments of hymns found in the Epistles, and that these must have been in use in the Apostolic Church. Prof. Fisher cites these passages in proof: Eph. v. 14; 1 Tim. iii. 16; 1 Pet. iii. 10-12. The claim demands careful examination. If it is valid, the position of the Psalm-singers is overthrown. To them at least the matter is vital.

1 Peter iii. 10-12 is a quotation, with slight verbal changes, from Psalm xxxiv. 12-16! Whatever led the learned historian to cite a Psalm<sup>s</sup> in proof of the use of uninspired hymns in the worship of the Apostolic Church passes even conjecture. Is it a case when "Homer nods"? What would be thought of the judgment of a Psalm-singer who should quote a verse from Toplady's "Rock of Ages" in support of the claim that Psalms are sung in United Presbyterian churches? But the cases are quite parallel.

Eph. v. 14 reads: "Wherefore he saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Who or what is here quoted? The verb "saith" has no subject expressed. King James and both the Revised Versions have "he" as the subject of "saith." In this case it is God that saith, "Awake." If we insert "it" as subject of "saith," then the reference is to Scripture—"Scripture saith." In either case the result is the same; it is an inspired word the Apostle quotes, no merely human utterance. By no possibility of exegetical dexterity can this verse of Ephesians be made to serve as evidence that "fragments of Christian hymns" are found in the New Testament Epistles. Moreover, Dr. Charles Hodge very strongly holds that

“as this formula of quotation is never used in the New Testament except when citations are made from the Old Testament, it cannot properly be assumed that the Apostle here quotes some Christian hymn with which the believers in Ephesus were familiar.” With Dr. Hodge agree Alford, Ellicott, Eadie, Graham, Moule, Brown, Blaikie, Barnes, and Meyer. Every one of these able students of Scripture affirms that Paul quotes from the Word of God, not at all from a merely human composition. They differ somewhat as to what place he cites, but that this is a Bible quotation they are unanimous. Thus it appears beyond peradventure that two of the texts appealed to by Prof. Fisher and others with him do not denote “Christian hymns”; they pertain to the inspired Scripture.

Turn we now to the third proof text, 1 Tim. iii. 16—“And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” Is this passage a fragment of a Christian hymn? So many besides Prof. Fisher affirm. On what ground does the claim rest? Not on history. The passage has no more history back of it or connected with it than a score of others in the Epistles to Timothy. It has nothing like the history which belongs to 1 Tim. i. 15, 16, for this has a background in Paul’s own life and experience; nor that of 1 Tim. vi. 13-16, which summarizes two supreme events in our Lord’s life. In all the historical records that have been consulted there is not a hint that this text is the fragment of a Christian hymn. Assertions by interpreters there are in plenty; of historical evidence there is none. The chief, if not the only, proof adduced in support of the view that it is the fragment of a “Christian hymn” is its poetical structure. It has the parallelism that distinguishes Hebrew poetry. Accordingly, the American Revision prints it as verse. Is the plea well founded? All intense thought, whether of writing or public speech, falls into rhythm. This is true of the best writing of uninspired men; it is preëminently true of the penmen

of Scripture. There is often a measured beat in the sentences that the reader feels, can almost hear. There are many such rhythmical passages in the Epistles. Let the witness of two Greek grammars be heard. The first is Winer's, "the prince of New Testament grammars." Winer furnishes thirteen instances of poetical parallelism, 1 Tim. iii. 16 being one of the thirteen. Green's Handbook, the second, gives seven more. Thus in all we have twenty such rhythmical texts in the Epistles. If we include the whole body of New Testament Scripture, the number will exceed thirty. These all have the poetical structure of 1 Tim. iii. 16. Are they all "fragments of Christian hymns"?

To establish beyond peradventure the truthfulness of the statements just made, three examples are given. Here is a specimen of what one (Humphreys) supposes is a "rhythmical doxology," 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16:—

Who is the blessed and only Potentate,  
 The King of kings,  
 And Lord of lords;  
 Who only hath immortality,  
 Dwelling in light unapproachable;  
 Whom no man hath seen, nor can see;  
 To Whom be honor and power eternal. Amen."

The second is furnished by Green's Handbook—Phil. iii. 10:—

"To know Him,  
 and the power of His resurrection,  
 and the fellowship of His sufferings,  
 being made conformable to His death."

The third, found also in Green's Handbook, is John x. 14, 15:—

"I am the good Shepherd;  
 and I know My own,  
 and Mine own know Me,  
 even as the Father knoweth Me,  
 and I know the Father;  
 and I lay down My life for the sheep."



It thus appears that 1 Tim. iii. 16 does not by any means stand alone as to poetical structure; it is only one of many passages of the like form. Therefore no weight can attach to its parallelism as proof of its being a "Christian hymn." The argument breaks down totally because it proves too much. If such exegesis should prevail, then no limit scarcely can be fixed to the hymnal fragments of the New Testament; the Book abounds with them.

One other passage must be briefly noted—2 Tim. ii. 11-13: "Faithful is the saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we endure, we shall also reign with Him; if we shall deny Him, He also will deny us; if we are faithless, He abideth faithful, for He cannot deny Himself" (R. V.). This great sentence has rhythmical arrangement; its parts balance each other as in genuine parallelism; it is as poetical in its structure as 1 Tim. iii. 16. But yet it is not the "fragment of a hymn," nor a brief "creed," nor yet a "liturgical fragment," although it has been called all these. The words, "faithful is the saying," seem to denote a quotation, but in the other places where they occur they cannot be thus understood (1 Tim. i. 15; iii. 1; iv. 9). All these "sayings" of Paul in the Pastoral Epistles belong to a time of extreme danger and persecution. These Letters were written in martyr times. Nero's persecution of Christians began in A. D. 64; it lasted till 68—four years of indescribable torture and suffering for the people of God. First and Second Timothy and Titus were written almost certainly after Nero's atrocities had begun. The peril was that Christians would quail before the dreadful trial, that they would deny Christ. Hence Paul writes to these young ministers of the Gospel to be steadfast, faithful, true even in death. Read in the light of martyr fires, his "sayings" glow with intensity of feeling, with the pathos and the entreaty of one who himself faces death as a witness for Christ. His words ring like a battle shout, like the sharp, abrupt orders of the commander on the field—"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life"; "watch thou in all things,

endure afflictions"; "hold fast the form of sound words"; "great is the mystery of godliness"; "if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us." Every one of these texts, and many more like them, have something of cadence; they ring like sharp steel, and there is a rhythm in their ring. Accordingly, they are not fragments of hymns, nor short creeds, nor quotations of any sort. They are the impassioned words of Christ's servant who appeals to his fellow-saints by the Spirit of God to hold fast, to fight bravely, and to hope to the end.

There are fourteen songs in the Book of Revelation, viz., Rev. iv. 8, 11; v. 9, 10, 12, 13; vii. 10, 12; xi. 8, 17, 18; xii. 10-12; xv. 3, 4; xix. 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8. The American Revision of the Bible marks these songs typographically as distinct and different from the rest of the Book. Sometimes these songs are cited as a justification of the use of other songs than the Psalms in God's worship. Let the following points be noted as a reply to the assertion above referred to:

1. These songs are all inspired by the Spirit of God. More than any other Book of the New Testament Canon, the Revelation insists on its being from God, that in it God unveils His purpose touching the future of this world, of His people, of their enemies, and of His Kingdom. Therefore these inspired songs can afford no ground whatever for the use of uninspired compositions in the worship of God.

2. They are sung almost exclusively by angels and glorified saints. The only apparent exception is Rev. v. 13—the song of creation. But even this does not contradict our statement. The voices of angels and saints are joined by the voice of creation, animate and inanimate, now made vocal in its praise to the Lamb. The tuneful utterances of the glorified and of angels before the Throne hardly belong to sinful mortals on earth.

3. They are sung in heaven. Hence, they do not pertain to this world.

4. There is not a shadow of a hint that these and the like

songs in the New Testament are divinely authorized to be employed in the worship of Christ's Church.

5. They are an essential part in the structure of the Apocalypse; they move within the circle of those mighty events which mark the winding up of the world's affairs, which characterize the final struggle between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. Hence, in the judgment of some of the most earnest students of the Book, they do not pertain to this dispensation.

## THE PSALMS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

BY THE REV. JAMES PARKER, PH. D., JERSEY CITY, N. J.

WE enter upon the discussion of our subject with certain facts clearly established, viz., (a) That the Psalter, or Book of Psalms, is divinely inspired; (b) that, as the name indicates, this Book was given to be used in praising God; and (c) that it was so used in the Old Testament Church for centuries.

Assuming these as established facts, the place of the Psalter in the New Testament can best be established by answering two questions:

1. Has the Book of Psalms been introduced authoritatively into, and used in, the New Testament dispensation?
2. Were the songs contained in this Book used exclusively in the worship of the New Testament?

In answering the first question there rises before us the hallowed memory of the "Upper Room." The Master and His disciples were observing the Passover. This is followed and superseded by the institution of the Lord's Supper. In that upper room the two dispensations, the old and new, meet. The old passes into the new as darkness into dawn. The time, the occasion, and the circumstances alike argue the fitness of what follows: "Having sung an hymn (literally, having hymned), they went out unto the Mount of Olives" (Matt. xxvi. 30; Mk. xiv. 26). That the song sung by our Saviour and His disciples was a selection from the Hallel, Psalms cxiii.-cxviii., is almost universally agreed among commentators. We pause only to note the consequence of this action. Thereby the Psalms and the ordinance of the Supper are indissolubly and forever bound together.

This same verb, "*humneo*," is used in two other instances in

the New Testament. One of these is Heb. ii. 12: "In the midst of the Church will I sing praises unto Thee." This is a quotation from the Twenty-Second Psalm, Septuagint Version, and sets forth the fact that this Messianic Psalm presents the Saviour as united with His people in their praises, just as He united with the disciples in the upper room; and as He declared by the mouth of the prophet Zephaniah He will yet do in the blessed time coming. Here we have a quotation from a Psalm spoken of as a "hymn," establishing, as did the action in the upper room, that Psalms may be called "hymns." The other instance of this word "*hymneo*" leads us to the inner dungeon in the Philippian jail. It is midnight, yet the prisoners are awake; for issuing from the inner dungeon comes the triumphant swell of a prayer-song. Paul and Silas "praying hymned," or were singing hymns. Here notice that the description is that of a single act—they "praying sang." This act was done in unison. Hence the matter used must have been familiar to both. These men were Jews, and knew the songs of the Psalter. Could any other songs have been so appropriate as many of the Psalms? Consult, *e. g.*, Psalms lxix. 33; lxxix. 11; cii. 20; and cxlvi. 7. All the lines of light from this incident—the persons, the place, the circumstances, and the action, converge in the conclusion that the "hymn" was a prayer-Psalms.

James v. 13: "Let him sing psalms." This passage also sheds light upon our theme. The word "sing" is *psallo*, whose root bears as one of its branches the noun *psalmos*, psalm. But, in addition, note that the writer of this exhortation is the chief pastor in Jerusalem, a strict observer of the Law, and an ardent advocate of retaining the old worship with the fewest possible changes. Is it supposable that James would pass by the Book familiar to him and to those addressed, and point out other songs for the rejoicing heart? In this connection let us remember that James wrote his letter to the scattered Israelites. How would they understand this exhortation? From childhood they had known about a Book of Praises. There is absolutely no evidence

that any other book of praises to God existed. The conclusion is irresistible that these Jews would understand James to refer to the songs of the Psalter.

Ephesians v. 19 and Col. iii. 16 furnish the fullest and clearest warrant for the Psalms in the New Testament. As these texts will be dealt with exegetically by others, it is ours to draw only certain deductions. We have here no authority to *compose* songs of worship. On the other hand, we have a command to sing the songs here indicated. If these included uninspired songs, then we have the command, not permission, but *command*, of the Holy Spirit to sing uninspired songs. We may ask, what uninspired songs does He thus command to be sung? How shall we determine? Is the human taste a sufficient criterion? Shall we trust to the judgment of a Church court? We ought to pause before we affirm that the Holy Spirit commanded us to sing imperfect compositions. Do we not find here a command to sing what He has produced, what He has appointed, and what is in all generations fit to be sung in the praise of God?

Again, on the supposition that either or both the words, "hymns and songs" refer to uninspired songs, we have the Holy Spirit joining together as equal songs that are unequal. For it is commonly admitted that the word "psalms" refers to the inspired songs of the Psalter. Even the most zealous contestant for the use of uninspired songs will admit that the song inspired is *sui generis*, of its own kind. He will admit that there is a distinction between the uninspired and inspired song comparable to the distinction between the writings of some good man, *e. g.*, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, and the Holy Scriptures. Yet if uninspired songs are included, we have this distinction ignored by the Holy Spirit, Who commands us to sing. On the other hand, if by the words "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" only the inspired songs of the Psalter are meant, the explanation is easy and natural. For observe that the Greek Version of the Old Testament Scriptures would be in the hands of these Gentile converts. In that version they had these three terms, *psalmos*, *humnos*, and

*odā* applied to different Psalms. The Apostle who wrote these exhortations was also familiar with these titles. The writer and those addressed would naturally and necessarily regard the inspired Psalter, and that alone, as indicated by the Holy Spirit in these commands.

In addition to the foregoing texts, there may be marshaled a number of considerations tending to the same conclusion, viz., that the Psalms were authoritatively introduced into, and used in, the New Testament dispensation.

(a) Consider the contents of the Psalter. Its sufficiency and adaptability to the New Testament dispensation will be covered by another paper. We view only the fact that the truth contained in many Psalms is specially fitted to the present dispensation. In these songs *all* peoples are called upon to praise God. All tribes, kindreds, tongues, and as well the lower orders of creation, together with the inanimate forces of nature, are formed into a mighty chorus, making earth vocal with God's praise. In these songs also you find Christ's work spoken of as a *finished* work. He is presented before us as the King of Glory before Whom the everlasting doors are lifted up; as the Almighty Conqueror Who has ascended up again leading captivity captive, in His session at the Father's right hand expecting until His enemies be made His footstool. These songs sweep on past the Resurrection and the Judgment, and in rapturous strains they reveal to us the joys of the ransomed in God's presence. Very many of the Psalms would be comparatively meaningless if restricted to the Old Testament dispensation. These songs are more Christian than Jewish. Well has Professor Robertson of Glasgow said: "The Psalter is indeed a New Testament work. Its pieces have been felt to be Christian hymns, expressing the feelings, attitudes, and relations that are cardinal to Christianity." Bishop Westcott writes: "The Psalter in its fullness belongs to no special time."

(b) The adaptation of the Psalms to the New Testament dispensation is further shown by the quotations made from the Psalter. Almost one-half of the quotations from the Old Testa-

ment in the New are taken from the Psalms. These not only indicate the chief steps in our Saviour's earthly course, but are specially luminous amid the darkness surrounding His death. We may not forget that He died with a Psalm upon His lips. We should remember that these quotations are index fingers pointing to the inward experiences of our blessed Lord. They enable us to view His very heart-throbs of longing love and infinite agony.

(c) The Psalter is also given full recognition in the New Testament. The title ascribed to it is "The Book of Psalms," or "The Psalms." Again and again our divine Master and the blessed Spirit thus set the seal of their approval upon this Book. This seal not only settles the inspiration of the Book, but likewise attests it as the Book of Praises.

(d) The oneness of the Church in all dispensations argues the fitness of the Psalter for the New Testament dispensation. The Church is one building being erected through the centuries. She has one Lord, one faith, one baptism. She is the heritor of the same covenants of promise from age to age. All the truth given to one generation is to be held in sacred trust, and faithfully handed down to succeeding generations. Hence the book of praises given to God's people in its fullness when the old dispensation was nearing its close was to be transmitted to the new dispensation. This fact is the only sufficient answer to the question, Why is there no Psalter in the New Testament? There was no need that the New Testament Church compose songs of praise to God. She found them ready for her use. Her duty was, and is, to seek the aid of the Holy Spirit Who produced these songs, that she may understand, appreciate, and employ them so as to show forth God's praise.

The foregoing considerations—the command to use the songs of the Psalter and the illustration of their use in the New Testament, the contents of the Psalter, the number and the character of the quotations from the Psalter found in the New Testament, and the unity of the Church under both Testaments—are so many



stones of an arch sustaining the conclusion that the Psalms were authoritatively introduced into, and used in, the worship of the New Testament.

Having concluded that the Book of Psalms has been authoritatively introduced into the New Testament Church, we turn to the other question—Were the songs contained in this Book used exclusively in the worship of the New Testament Church? The answer to this question leads us to examine the ground on which those who advocate the use of uninspired songs base their claims. We assume that the principle, “Whatsoever is not commanded is forbidden,” is Scriptural, and so confine ourselves to the attempt to answer those who claim the authority of God’s Word for the use of uninspired songs.

The supposed sources of authority are four. *First.* The so-called songs in the Gospel according to Luke are cited. We speak of these as “so-called” songs advisedly. There is no trace of *singing* on the part of any of the human composers. Mary “said”—the Magnificat was evidently a meditation; Zacharias “prophesied, saying”; Simeon blessed God and “said”; and Anna “gave thanks” unto God. But if these so-called songs were real songs, what comfort could come from this fact to the advocate of uninspired songs? These were inspired utterances, whatever their form.

*Second.* This same assertion can be made concerning the poetic utterances in the Book of Revelation, which are also supposed to furnish authority for the use of uninspired songs. These are fourteen in number. Some of them are called songs. All of them are inspired utterances. In only one of these does earth join. In this case there is no mention of singing. The word used to express their utterance is “saying.” Where songs are introduced, they evidently express the sentiment of the worshipers, but do not furnish a specimen of regular worship. If anyone accepts these as a directory for worship, he must be prepared to furnish each worshiper with a harp and golden viol while he is addressing God in song. The view that these poetic utterances

reflected the usages of the Church in John's time could be entertained only by one who is so eager to establish a theory that he overlooks the fact that the contents of this Book are a revelation from heaven, not a reflection from earth. This view is the outgrowth of a tendency, all too common in modern Criticism, to find a natural basis for everything in the realm of revelation. But if anyone is disposed to contend that there is a likeness between these sublime utterances of heaven and the songs of the Church on earth, we enter no objection and express no surprise. We recognize that the same divine attributes are praised, and the same feelings indulged, by the worshipers before the Throne as are indicated in the songs to be sung in the earthly sanctuary. And is not this to be expected? Is not the Holy Spirit the author of the praise there, even as He should be here?

*Third.* 1 Cor. xiv. 26, "Each of you hath a psalm," etc., has been eagerly seized upon by the pleader for ritualism as well as the advocate of uninspired songs in divine worship. We are told that we find here "an arrangement of service" at Corinth. The mere reading of the context furnishes sufficient proof that the service at Corinth had been deranged. The Holy Spirit is rebuking disorder. He is commanding that the service be conducted decently. To elevate the disorder and confusion at Corinth into a divine arrangement of service is an illustration of exegesis extraordinary. As to the word "psalm" found in this passage, the most natural explanation is that it was one of the songs of the Psalter. Such opinion is strengthened by the word "*hath*"—"Each of you hath a psalm." This would seem to indicate that the persons referred to came to the meeting with selected Psalms. This view that the songs were brought to the meeting is held by certain of our opponents, who speak of these songs as "hymns." They are careful not to tell us whence these selected hymns were obtained. Another view of this passage is that we have here an illustration of the exercise of the supernatural gifts, and hence these psalms were improvised praises produced by the immediate action of the Holy Spirit upon those

who composed them. The cause of inspired Psalmody is neither helped nor hurt by this view. For observe that the action described is not congregational but individual—"each one." Again, if improvised at the time under the influence of the Holy Spirit, these psalms were inspired. If such inspired effusions were used at Corinth, they have passed away with the other special gifts then bestowed. And just as the Canon of the Scriptures is not affected by the revelations then given, so the songs of the inspired Psalter are not affected by these effusions.

*Fourth.* As to the final ground for the authority to use uninspired songs in God's worship, it is claimed that we find fragments of hymns scattered through the New Testament. It may be remarked that those only find these fragments who search for them as for hid treasure. Professor George P. Fisher in his "Church History" mentions three such specimens—Eph. v. 14; 1 Tim. iii. 16; and 1 Peter iii. 10-12. Of all these and similar references it may be remarked that, while containing certain poetic elements, the idea that they are fragments of hymns is purely a conjectural surmise. Prof. Fisher is particularly unfortunate in two out of three of his selected specimens, for in Eph. v. 14—"Wherefore He [or it] saith, Awake thou that sleepest," etc.,—either God or the divine Word is the subject of the verb, and in either case the quotation is inspired. Again, 1 Peter iii. 10-12 is a quotation direct from the Thirty-Fourth Psalm. Here we reach absurdity's height—a quotation from an inspired Psalm used as a proof that uninspired hymns are found in the New Testament.

Even a hasty examination of the grounds for the use of uninspired songs in the worship of the New Testament must result in the conviction that such foundation is wholly unsubstantial. In consequence, the conclusion is warranted that only the inspired songs of the Psalter are recognized in the New Testament.

This conclusion is confirmed by the testimony of ecclesiastical history. Dr. Schaff says: "We have no complete religious song remaining from the period of persecution, *i. e.*, the first three cen-

turies, except the song of Clement of Alexandria to the Divine Logos, which, however, cannot be called a hymn, and was probably never intended for public use." Such testimony might be multiplied indefinitely. On the supposition that they were used, is it not in order to ask what has become of the uninspired songs used in the New Testament? Is it credible that such songs were composed and sung during the Apostolic Age when not one authenticated line of any one of them remains? In the language of our own Dr. Grier, "There is no more sheer assumption in all theological controversy than that the Early Church made and sang their own hymns."

Without underestimating the loftiness of their strain, and the fitness and grandeur of the truth they contain, we must still affirm that uninspired hymns are separated from the inspired Psalms by a gulf as great and fixed as that which separates the human from the divine. No advocate of uninspired songs can place his hand upon any hymn-book of man's composition and say, "The Lord hath appointed this." On the other hand, the songs of the Psalter are stamped with the King's own seal. These songs are the golden bond uniting the past, the present, and the future, and enabling the people of God in all ages to utter in song the things that belong unto their King. While these songs may be termed "ancient," like Him Whose royal claims and agonizing passion and shepherd care they so fully set forth, like Him also their youth is as the dewdrops from morn's womb. Like that mighty rock that rears its majestic front where strive the waters of the stormy Atlantic and the blue Mediterranean, so this divine Psalter, based upon the eternal foundation of God's will, lifted high above the strife of man's conceptions of truth, has stood during the centuries bathed in the sunshine of the divine approval, and it will stand as a witness to every coming age that it alone contains the matter for the proper praise of every attribute of God, and the proper expression of every need and longing of man.

A SPECIAL EXEGESIS OF COL. III. 16 AND EPH. V. 19

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AS even a glance at their contents shows, the Epistle to the Ephesians and that to the Colossians are closely alike. About half of the verses in the former have parallels in the latter, and there are other resemblances as well. This twinship is explained when it is remembered that the two letters were written at the same time and to communities similarly circumstanced. Among the coincidences in thought and language are to be numbered the texts under study, which almost repeat each other.

Turning to these duplicate exhortations, it appears at once that they are of peculiar interest in that they yield a glimpse of the simple worship of primitive days. Their value in this direction is heightened by the fact that one of them is addressed to a plurality of churches, it being now accepted broadly that Ephesians was sent as a circular to Christians in the province of Asia. True, the question has been raised whether they have to do with worship at all, whether Paul is not touching merely upon the intercourse of believers in their family life, at their love-feasts, their social gatherings, and other meetings, and suggesting mutual edification by song. On this mooted point the common verdict is that the main, though not exclusive, reference is to the stated services of the public assembly, which seem to have been of a free and elastic nature. That worship, as well as joint instruction, is in mind is indicated by the concluding words in each citation—"singing with grace in your hearts unto God," "singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord."

With the foregoing inquiry answered, it may be added as beyond doubt that all the resources of the Early Church as regards her treasury of sacred song are embraced in the "psalms

and hymns and spiritual songs" here mentioned. In the three terms the inventory is evidently complete. Here then are classical passages which must be consulted in connection with any investigation into the hymnology of the Apostolic period, passages which have a decisive bearing, therefore, on what compositions may be employed properly in the ordinance of praise.

As to their meaning, there has been pronounced disagreement. The advocates of uninspired songs in worship look on them as strongholds, arguing therefrom that in the age of the Apostles the Psalter was supplemented by new lyrics, and that therefore, as a necessary consequence, the legitimacy of the modern hymn is established. Some writers on this side declare themselves in a very dogmatic way, dismissing lightly the idea of contradiction. On the other hand, it is alleged that there is no cause for supposing that Paul's "hymns and spiritual songs" were anything different from the canonical Psalms, and that there is no license here for the use of other devotional pieces than the Psalms in the worship of God. The latter is the view which will be upheld in this exegesis. It challenges the opposite interpretation as being but a surmise, and offers a series of substantial reasons for its own correctness.

To begin with, it should be realized that present usage as regards the debated terms plays no part in fixing their sense. One can be misled by the seemingly familiar phraseology, and think forthwith of the hard and fast distinction now made between Psalms and hymns. But we are deciphering what was penned in A. D. 61 or 62, long centuries before any of the uninspired productions in the hymnals of to-day were extant. In order, therefore, to make these lines intelligible, we must transport ourselves back into that past to which Paul and his readers belong, and there undertake our exposition with open-mindedness and cautious discrimination.

As an approach toward identifying the poems intended by these designations, there is clear evidence at hand that all of them were divinely inspired, indited under the extraordinary influence

of the Holy Spirit. Preliminary to what is deemed decisive proof, certain considerations which go to make this important claim a strong probability may be adduced.

1. First, in these verses the direction given is not to prepare or provide songs of praise, but only to sing them. On this we must be permitted to insist. But in the absence of an express warrant for so doing, would not these Asia Minor Christians have been chary about writing original hymns for rendition in worship, when the Psalter, written on the mountain-tops of inspiration, and full of the things of God, was everywhere, as is allowed, a congregational handbook? Is it likely that any, self-advised and unaided, would have had the temerity or the desire to attempt such an innovation?

2. Furthermore, had any of Gentile extraction exercised this liberty, would it not have excited strong protest among their Jewish brethren? The first converts to Christianity were generally Jews. These formed the beginnings of the churches in the towns and cities of the Roman Empire, and for a time they must have had prestige and privileged position. They brought with them from the synagogue the highly cherished Psalms, those Psalms which were associated with their holiest traditions, and which were known to have been meet for the Master's use, and thereby doubly consecrated. Clinging to these with an inherited reverence, they must have resented vigorously an uninspired Gentile hymnody. The fact, therefore, that on the subject of praise there is not the slightest echo of discord or controversy in the Apostolic Church, indicates that there was no intrusion of any alien element.

3. Again, it is altogether improbable that hymnists, as measured by even human standards, could be found in the churches of this date. The Gentile members, within whose circle the search is confined, had been but recently rescued from the ignorance and pollution of heathenism, and they had immature, often faulty, understanding of religious doctrine. Their literary capabilities, too, must have been limited, for "not many wise after the flesh,

not many mighty, not many noble, were called." Indeed, the low social status of the early Christians was the standing reproach of hostile critics. All this being true, where are we to find the mellow piety, the spiritual discernment, the education, and the poetic genius and art which must be taken for granted if uninspired songs fit to be named alongside the Psalms are here in mind? Men who deny the genuineness of Ephesians and Colossians allege that the reference is to just such songs, and then proceed to conclude that for this very reason, among others, these Epistles betray themselves as later than the Apostolic era.

4. Moreover, if the Psalms of Scripture are intended by the word "psalms," as is assumed for the present, it is quite unthinkable that Paul would link human compositions with those of the Spirit of God, and direct that they be used for the same end. It is true that in most hymnals the inspired and the uninspired are intermixed, regardless of the chasm in thought and tone which separates them. Occasionally, owing to more conservatism and a finer appreciation of the proprieties, this confusion is modified to the extent that the Psalms are kept together and assigned the first pages. But all of this is neither here nor there. We are interpreting Paul, and he had exact conceptions of inspiration. It was he who distinguished the Old Testament writings, inclusive of the Psalter, as "God-breathed" literature, clothed with inviolable sanctity.<sup>1</sup> It was he who described himself, an Apostle of the New Covenant, as receiving truth by divine revelation, and as giving it utterance "not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth."<sup>2</sup> It seems incredible, therefore, that in this instance he should trample upon a distinction which elsewhere he guards jealously and put uninspired songs in competition with those inspired as having equal teaching worth.

What has been noticed thus far affords cogent grounds for the belief that the hymns and spiritual songs of our passages were all of inspired quality. The crowning demonstration of this, however, lies in the descriptive term, "spiritual." It matters nothing

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 13.



ing in the argument whether this adjective is taken as limiting each of the preceding words or not. There are those who think that it extends to the "psalms" and "hymns," an opinion which is not out of harmony with Greek syntax.<sup>3</sup> But, of course, there is no rule demanding this, and on the other hand, as will appear later, there is sufficient reason for restricting "spiritual" to "songs" alone. At the same time it reflects character on all the compositions of praise here specified. The three words may be synonyms, as we prefer to think, or it may be said with Meyer that the spiritual songs are the genus, of which the psalms and hymns are the species, or "spiritual songs" may denote the lowest class of a triple category. In any event, when the phrase "spiritual" is defined, it is certain that the "psalms" and "hymns," no less than the "songs," are duly characterized.

Now what is the import of the word? In answer to this pivotal question we affirm that the Greek original, which is *πνευματικός*, has no such latitude of meaning as "spiritual" has in English, and that it designates commonly whatever is immediately given or produced by the Spirit of God. It is construed thus by an overwhelming majority of critical authorities, including those of the greatest weight. A few special citations will not be amiss. Dr. Warfield, of Princeton, writes thus in *The Presbyterian Review*<sup>4</sup>: "Of the twenty-five instances in which the word occurs in the New Testament, in no single case does it sink even as low in its reference as the human spirit; and in twenty-four of them is derived from *πνεῦμα*, the Holy Ghost. In this sense of *belonging to, or determined by, the Holy Spirit*, the New Testament usage is uniform with the one single exception of Eph. vi. 12, where it seems to refer to the higher, though fallen, superhuman intelligences. The appropriate translation for it in each

<sup>3</sup> So Hofmann, Soden, Koppe, Rosenmüller, Walter Lowrie, and James Dick (Belfast). T. K. Abbott, in *The International Critical Commentary*, leaves the question open. Under this view the position of the adjective is looked upon as determining its form. While qualifying each substantive, it takes the nearest gender.

<sup>4</sup> July number of 1880.

case is Spirit-given, or Spirit-led, or Spirit-determined." In *The Expositor* <sup>5</sup> Dr. Warfield repeats himself substantially, and adds that this interpretation "is gradually becoming recognized by the best expositors." Dr. Laidlaw, of the United Free Church College, Edinburgh, treating the term in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, says that "everything *πνευματικόν*, spiritual, is a divine product or creation." Eadie, in his Commentary on Ephesians, <sup>6</sup> remarks that *πνευματικός* means "produced by or belonging to the Holy Spirit," and adds that this is "the ruling sense of the epithet in the New Testament." Dr. Charles Hodge, in his Commentary on First Corinthians, <sup>7</sup> says: "One of the most common meanings of the word *spiritual* in Scripture is *derived from the Spirit*. Spiritual gifts and spiritual blessings are gifts and blessings of which the Spirit is the author." The same position is maintained by such New Testament lexicographers as Cremer, Parkhurst, Robinson, and Thayer, and it is advocated in McClintock and Strong's Encyclopedia.

Among others who comment on the word *πνευματικός* as it is found elsewhere in the New Testament and advance the meaning given are Barnes, Chalmers, Denney, Farrar, Fausset, Frommüller (Lange Commentary), Gifford, Godet, Gore, Hort, Kling (Lange Commentary), Moule, Neander, Olshausen, Sanday, Schmiedel, Stanley, Moses Stuart, and Marvin R. Vincent. Coming to authorities on the passages under review, many of the more eminent and scholarly sustain the same exegesis and account these "spiritual songs" as inspired, "the productions of the Holy Ghost in the department of poetry." See the New Testament lexicons by Cremer, by Robinson, and by Thayer. From commentators on Colossians or Ephesians we cite Alford, Beet, Braune (Lange Commentary), Cheyne, Cone, Dale, Eadie, Elliott, Findlay, Maclaren, Meyer, Riddle, Salmond, and Tholuck. Hodge and Barnes are not included in this last list, and their adverse interpretation furnishes an instructive warning of how

<sup>5</sup> Third Series, Vol. 4, p. 137.

<sup>6</sup> See comment on Eph. i. 3.

<sup>7</sup> See comment on 1 Cor. x. 3.

expositors may be swayed by personal inclination and practice. Dealing with the term in Eph. v. 19, Hodge writes thus: "This may mean either *inspired*, *i. e.*, derived from the Spirit; or expressing spiritual thoughts and feelings. This latter is the more probable." And yet in every instance, except this one, in which *πνευματικός* occurs in the New Testament Books on which he has commented, Hodge holds stoutly to the other idea of the word, and even here he is constrained to admit it as applicable. Barnes is guilty of the same fault.

The sum of our finding thus far is, first, that there is a body of strong presumptive evidence for the inspiration of Paul's "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," and, second, that the adjective *πνευματικός* lifts them to this high level beyond peradventure, stamping them as written by poetically gifted men under the extraordinary impulse and guidance of the Holy Spirit. In keeping with such a conclusion is the following from an editorial in the *North British Review*, of Edinburgh: "It is probable that, while the miraculous influences of the Spirit continued upon earth, no uninspired songs were admitted into the public or private devotions of Christians."<sup>8</sup> Even if we went no farther it would appear, and we so assert, that in Eph. v. 19 and Col. iii. 16 there is not a scintilla of warrant for the use of humanly composed lyrics in worship. Though other inspired odes than those in the Book of Psalms should be countenanced in these passages, it were a bewildering feat of inference that would legalize therefrom the multitudinous hymnology of to-day, for this has been wrought out at the discretion, and according to the wisdom, of fallible men. Authorization for such an uninspired hymnology is imperatively required, but they labor in vain who seek it here.

To overcome this objection there are some of our hymn-singing brethren who claim that a hymn penned by a good man and embodying evangelical sentiment may be rated as "inspired." Thus Dr. R. McCheyne Edgar, of Dublin, wrote recently: "His [the Holy Spirit's] inspirations were not exhausted when the Canon was complete; and if He inspires prayers which have never

<sup>8</sup> Vol. xxvii. p. 195.

been embodied in any prayer-book, canonical or otherwise, is it not reasonable to believe that He has likewise inspired the poets who have devoted themselves to sacred song, although their 'spiritual songs' never could be placed in the Canon?"<sup>9</sup> Such a contention leads to the most perilous consequences, hiding a lurking, though an unconscious, infidelity. It strikes at the Scriptural doctrine of inspiration, confusing it with spiritual illumination, just as was done by Schleiermacher and his school. Inconsistent, as it is, with the faith of the Church universal, which has always made a marked distinction between the writings of inspired men and those of ordinary believers, it merits nothing but censure.

Estimating these "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" as all inspired, several conjectures remain open. The first is that Paul, having in mind the strange exaltation which pervaded the Apostolic Church, alludes to new miraculous songs improvised on the spur of the moment by those in a condition of inspired ecstasy; *i. e.*, he alludes to a rhythmic form of the gift of tongues. This theory has no foundation, because

1. A store of existing lyrics is presupposed in the language of these passages. Evidently Paul enjoins his readers to sing what was then accessible, and does not intimate unknown, non-existent odes, yet to be extemporized. Moreover, the "psalms" referred to were in existence, and the drunken songs of heathen feasts which stand in antithesis in one of the contexts (Eph. v. 18) were ready-made. Why not these "hymns and spiritual songs" also?

2. There is no proof that lyrical endowments were among the grace-gifts, the charismatic activities, of the Pauline churches.

3. Paul said of the gift of tongues that it did not edify the Church except under certain limitations,<sup>10</sup> and, therefore, so far as instruction was concerned, he must have depreciated kindred outbursts of feeling voiced in song. Here, however, he urges what is of prime value for teaching and admonition.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Progressive Presbyterianism*, p. 144.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 1-33.

<sup>11</sup> Col. iii. 16.

Since ecstatic impromptus are not to be thought of, let us turn to another theory, viz., that inspired songs original to the age and prepared for general use by the Apostles or other supernaturally gifted men are referred to. This also is baseless and untenable.

1. There is no recorded divine commission in the New Testament constituting hymnists, nor is there any promised help of the Holy Spirit in a lyrical direction.

2. Among the diversities of gifts bestowed in rich measure at the outset of the present dispensation there is no mention of that of sacred poesy, and yet in Old Testament times hymn-making was just such a gift.

3. There is unbroken silence in the New Testament regarding the actual making of such odes. The formation of an inspired hymnology was a most important occurrence in the former economy, so that it is signalized in the Old Testament. We might reasonably expect, therefore, that there would have been some hint at least of a similar phenomenon in the Apostolic Church, and the more because the long-standing ordinance of Psalmody would have been altered thereby.

4. Not one such hymn, nor yet a single authentic vestige of one, has been preserved. There are no canticles in the Third Gospel, though hasty writers speak of the "Hymns of the Nativity." The songs of the Apocalypse are not quotations from a hymn-book, but integral parts of the Apocalypse itself; they belong to the visions which John saw as he was swept away into the heavens. The assertion that there are hymnic fragments scattered over the New Testament rests on sheer conjecture, a little euphonious Greek being all that can be cited.<sup>12</sup> Of an

<sup>12</sup> Dean Howson, commenting on the conjecture that a certain passage in Romans is a lyric quotation, says: "The fact that the passage can be broken up into a system of irregular lines, consisting of dochmiac and choriambic feet, proves nothing; because there is scarcely any passage in Greek prose which might not be resolved into lyrical poetry by a similar method; just as, in English, the columns of a newspaper may be read off as hexameters (spondaic, or otherwise), quite as good as most of the so-called English hexameters which are published." *Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, by Conybeare and Howson, Vol. i., p. 195.

alleged Apostolic hymnody a recent critic so competent as Eduard Reuss, of Strasburg, has said that it "cannot be proved from the doubtful traces which have been adduced as evidence therefor."<sup>13</sup> There being no relics of an Apostolic hymnody extant, the presumption is strong that there never was such a hymnody. Had extra-Psalmodic hymns and songs of inspired origin been current in the early Church, they could not all have perished.

5. As Cheyne states in *The Encyclopedia Biblica*,<sup>14</sup> the language of Paul presupposes a stock of songs which were known by heart and easily rose to the lips. Is it supposable that within a generation after the death of Christ a collection of Apostolic odes coördinate with the Psalms had crystallized into shape, and that these were familiarly known in the churches of Asia Minor, which were less than ten years old?

Reviewing the argument, surely it may be held as a moral certainty that in the infant Church of the New Testament there was no creation of inspired hymns for social worship. Even though, however, the opposite was admitted, the fact must still be faced that such productions were short-lived and are lost beyond recall. The matter, therefore, would remain precisely the same as to us, for no human composesures can replace what were "God-breathed."

The ground is now cleared for insisting that the praise-songs of these twin passages are those of the Psalter alone. As a counterpart to the interpretations which have been negatived, it is susceptible of absolute demonstration that the three terms were applied to the Psalms of Scripture long before Paul wrote, and that this usage was universally prevalent in the Church of his day. For the proof of this we rely chiefly upon the Septuagint. The Jews of the Dispersion, not only in Egypt, but in Western Asia and Europe, spoke Greek habitually. During the third and second centuries B. C. there was made in their interest the Greek

<sup>13</sup> *History of the New Testament*, Vol. i., p. 162.

<sup>14</sup> Article on *Hymns*.

Version of the Old Testament styled the Septuagint (LXX.), so called from the legend that it was executed by seventy translators. Its use spread rapidly, and at the dawn of the Christian era all Hellenistic Jews read their Bible through this medium. Philo of Alexandria, the best representative of the Hellenist, depended wholly upon the Septuagint, and Josephus, himself a Palestinian Jew, cites it more than he does the Hebrew. Accordingly, the heralds of the gospel found this Version ready to their hand, and it went with them wherever Greek was understood. Just as the New Testament was written in Greek for Greek-speaking peoples, so the Old Testament, the only Scriptures of the early Apostolic period, was circulated through the Church in the Greek dress of the Septuagint. That the Apostles were well acquainted with this translation and commonly used it is shown in that two-thirds of their Old Testament quotations are from its pages. Turning to the recipients of these letters, it is granted that the Christians in Asia Minor were predominantly Gentile, and yet, as Ramsay has proved,<sup>15</sup> Jews were numerous in this region, particularly in the Græco-Asiatic cities, and the Book of the Acts makes it plain that they and their proselytes were the nuclei of the churches there planted.<sup>16</sup> This alone guarantees that the Septuagint was in ordinary use in these communities. And even though a Jewish element is shut out from the reckoning, the Gentile Christians at Ephesus, Colossæ, and elsewhere could have read the Scriptures in that Version only which was in general currency, and which had received Apostolic sanction. It follows that the Psalter-songs, which, it is almost unanimously admitted, were an integral part of their worship, and which were chanted to their Greek music, must have been from the translation of the Seventy.

Consulting this great Version, the most cursory reader will find, first, that there is a steady recurrence of these three desig-

<sup>15</sup> See *The Church in the Roman Empire* and *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*.

<sup>16</sup> See Acts xiii. 14, xiv. 1, xvi. 1, 3, xix. 8, 10.

nations, "psalms," "hymns," and "songs," in the formal titles to the compositions of the Psalter; second, that the terms "hymns" and "songs," with their related verbs, occur again and again in the text or body of the Psalms; and, third, that the same terms are employed frequently in the historical Books, both canonical and apocryphal, with reference to the Psalter. Besides the caption of the entire Psalter, which is "Psalms" (*ψαλμοί*), it is well known that most of these inspired odes have headlines of their own. In sixty-seven of these the word "psalm" (*ψαλμός*) appears,<sup>17</sup> in six the word "hymn" (*ὕμνος*),<sup>18</sup> and in thirty-five the word "song" (*ὠδή*),<sup>19</sup> the same Greek words used in the passages before us. Still further: "psalm" and "song" are conjoined twelve times,<sup>20</sup> and "psalm" and "hymn" twice.<sup>21</sup> In the heading of the Seventy-Sixth Psalm all three terms stand side by side, just as here, and the heading of the Sixty-Fifth Psalm contains "psalm" and "song," while in the first verse the composition is spoken of as a "hymn." It is noteworthy also in these compound inscriptions that our terms interchange easily, and that "hymn" is written repeatedly in the plural, suggesting that in the estimation of the Seventy it was applicable to all the poems of the Psalter. There are such various phrasings as "a psalm of a song," "a song of a psalm," "a psalm, a song," "in

<sup>17</sup> Viz., Psalms i., iv., v., vi., vii., viii., ix., xi., xii., xiii., xiv., xv., xix., xx., xxi., xxii., xxiii., xxiv., xxv., xxix., xxx., xxxi., xxxviii., xl., xli., xliii., xliv., xlvi., xlvi., xlvi., xlvi., xlix., l., li., lxii., lxiii., lxiv., lxv., lxvi., lxvii., lxviii., lxxiii., lxxv., lxxvi., lxxvii., lxxix., lxxx., lxxxii., lxxxii., lxxxiii., lxxxiv., lxxxv., lxxxvii., lxxxviii., xcii., xciv., xcvi., xcix., c., ci., cviii., cix., cx., cxxxviii., cxxxix., cxl., cxli., cxliii. All numberings of the Psalms are those of the English Version, not of the LXX.

<sup>18</sup> Psalms vi., liv., lv., lxi., lxvii., lxxvi.

<sup>19</sup> Psalms iv., xviii., xxx., xxxix., xlv., xlvi., lxv., lxvi., lxviii., lxxv., lxxvi., lxxxiii., lxxxvii., lxxxviii., xci., xcii., xciii., xcvi., xcvi., cviii., cxx., cxxi., cxxii., cxxiii., cxxiv., cxxv., cxxvi., cxxvii., cxxviii., cxxix., cxxx., cxxxii., cxxxii., cxxxiii., cxxxiv.

<sup>20</sup> Psalms iv., xxx., xlvi., lxvii., lxxv., lxxxiii., lxxxvii., lxxxviii., xcii., cviii.

<sup>21</sup> Psalms vi. and lxvii.



psalms a song," "in hymns a psalm," "in hymns, a psalm, a song."

Turning from the titles of the Greek Psalter, the terms "hymn" and "song," with their cognate verbs and substantives, are interspersed freely through the text as well of its odes, being descriptive of these compositions.<sup>22</sup> Three citations out of sixteen will suffice. The Fortieth Psalm, third verse, runs: "He put into my mouth a new lay, a hymn (*ὕμνον*) to our God." At the close of the Seventy-Second Psalm there is the line, "The hymns (*οἱ ὕμνοι*) of David, the son of Jesse, are ended." This colophon may apply to the entire preceding collection, Psalms i. and lxxii. inclusive, as Perowne contends, or it may have been attached to some group of Davidic Psalms incorporated in the Psalter. In either case it shows that the LXX. translators comprehended Psalms indiscriminately and collectively under the name "hymns" (*ὕμνοι*). Again, in Psalm cxxxvii. 3 we read: "There they who took us captive demanded of us words of songs (*ᾠδῶν*), and they who led us away said, Chant us a hymn (*ὕμνον*) out of the songs (*ἐκ τῶν ᾠδῶν*) of Zion." Here the word "songs" (*ᾠδαί*) covers all the Psalms, and a "hymn" may be selected at random from these "songs."

When we pass from the Psalms themselves to the historical Books of the Septuagint, the terminology is identical. In 2 Samuel, 1 Chron., 2 Chron., and Nehemiah there are sixteen instances of this, and in them the Psalms as a plurality are called "hymns" (*ὕμνοι*) or "songs" (*ᾠδαί*) indifferently, and the singing of them is called "hymning" (*ὕμνέω, ὑμνωδέω, ὑμνησις*).<sup>23</sup> In the Apocryphal Books of the Septuagint, likewise, sometimes considered an appendage to the Old Testament, sometimes a part of it, the same sustained usage catches the eye at least ten times, as will be seen by examining The Wisdom of Jesus, the

<sup>22</sup> See Psalms ix. 16, xxii. 22, xl. 3, lxv. 1, lxix. 30, lxxi. 6, 8, lxxii. 20, xcii. 1-3, c. 4, cxviii. 14, cxix. 171, cxxxvii. 3, 4, cxliv. 9, cxlviii. 14.

<sup>23</sup> See 2 Samuel vi. 5, xxii. 1, 2, 1 Chron. xv. 22, xvi. 42, xxv. 6, 2 Chron. v. 13, vii. 6, xxiii. 13, 18, xxix. 30, xxxiv. 12, Neh. xii. 24, 27, 36, 46.

Son of Sirach, or Ecclesiasticus, and the First and Second Books of Maccabees.<sup>24</sup>

This then is the multiplied and cumulative witness of the Septuagint, Paul's Bible and the Bible of the Asia Minor churches. Does it not point indubitably to the conclusion that the Apostle intends nothing but the Greek Psalter when he employs the three denominations it had worn so long, and which would recur readily to every mind? And here it is worth while to observe again his injunction. He does not tell those addressed to make psalms, hymns, and songs, but to use such as they had, and with which they are assumed to be conversant. And what were these? What in the circumstances could they have been, in the thought of either the writer or the readers, but that divine system of lyrics known by these three ancient titles, and which, so far as history reveals, was the only compilation of sacred songs known by any name? Let it be supposed that the Book of Psalms alone had been used in the Christian Church up to the present, that it had taken root in the affections of the people, and that in the Authorized Version of the Bible and the popular praise-manuals its one hundred and fifty odes were styled psalms, hymns, and songs. Suppose next that a pastoral letter was dispatched to our congregations, advising the people to let the word of Christ dwell in them richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. What would be understood by the exhortation? The question answers itself. But these were precisely the conditions among the churches of Asia Minor. According to the principles of historical criticism, therefore, the evidence is ample and decisive that these passages reproduce the technical Psalter designations of the Septuagint.

As against successful dissent, notice that authorities are practically unanimous that in the first of the three words the Psalter

<sup>24</sup> See Eccus. xlvii. 8, li. 11, 1 Macc. iv. 24, 33, 54, xiii. 51, 2 Macc. i. 30, x. 7, 38, xii. 37.

is referred to, either exclusively or chiefly.<sup>25</sup> Reuss and others count it inconceivable that the word "psalm" (*ψαλμός*) should have a wider sense anywhere in the New Testament.<sup>26</sup> It being settled then that the Apostle in penning the word "psalm" had definitely before him the Psalter in its Greek dress, how is it possible to deny fairly that the terms which he conjoins with "psalms" are limited to that customary application of them to the Psalter which is testified to by the Septuagint? In such a grouping, coördinated with "psalms," and without any new use of them being hinted, how could they have been diverted from their stereotyped meaning?

Our position, already well fortified, receives striking confirmation outside the Alexandrian Version. Philo, the learned Jewish philosopher, writing during our Lord's life and immediately after (died A. D. 40), never once uses the word "psalm" (*ψαλμός*) or its compounds in connection with his many quotations from the Psalter, but always "hymn" (*ὕμνος*) or one of its compounds.<sup>27</sup> This leads Cheyne to surmise that Alexandria had a special edition of the Greek Psalter with "hymns" (*ὕμνοι*) as its running title,<sup>28</sup> while Edwin Hatch accounts for Philo's practice on the theory that "hymns" (*ὕμνοι*) was the older designation of the Psalms.<sup>29</sup> Flavius Josephus, the celebrated historian, who represents Jewish Hellenistic literature in the gen-

<sup>25</sup> So Dr. Alexander, Bishop of Derry, Bloomfield, Eadie, Hodge, Lathrop, Lightfoot, Maclaren, Oehler, Olshausen, Reuss, Salmond, Stier, Tholuck, and most commentators.

<sup>26</sup> At 1 Cor. xiv. 26 some find in *ψαλμός* a reference to an improvised effusion of an inspired character; but writers like Binnie, Trench, and Reuss oppose this, and make the usage of the word absolute. The latter position is maintained also in the Encyclopædia Britannica (article on *Hymns*), and by Graham in his Commentary on Ephesians.

<sup>27</sup> See *Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis*, 16 (i.284); *De Agricultura*, 12 (i.308); *De Plantatione Noe*, 7 (i.335); *De Confusione Linguarum*, 11 (i.410); *De Migratione Abrahami*, 28 (i.460); *De Profugis*, 11 (i.555); *De Mutatione Nominum*, 20 (i.596); *De Somniis*, Book i.13 (i.632) and Book ii.37 (i.690).

<sup>28</sup> *Bampton Lectures* for 1889, p. 12.

<sup>29</sup> *Essays in Biblical Greek*, p. 174.

eration which followed Philo, tells how "David composed songs (*ψάδας*) and hymns (*ὕμνους*)" and alludes repeatedly to the Psalms as "hymns."<sup>30</sup> The New Testament itself, elsewhere than in these passages in Ephesians and Colossians, agrees unmistakably in the same witness. In Matt. xxvi. 30 and Mk. xiv. 26 it is recorded that after the institution of the Supper our Lord and His Apostles "hymned" or "sung an hymn" (*ὕμνησαντες*). All grant that what Jesus is thus described as singing on that sad night was the second part of the Passover Hallel, Psalms cxv. and cxviii. inclusive, and yet the Evangelists call this the "singing of hymns."<sup>31</sup> Let it be noted that these Gospels echo the established habit of the Church at the time when they were written,<sup>32</sup> and that they and our two Epistles belong to the same decade.

And now, massing what has been gleaned from the Septuagint, from the eminent Hellenistic authors named, and from the New Testament itself, it is indisputable that during Apostolic days, in both Jewish and Christian circles, it was the custom to refer to the lyrics of the Psalter as "psalms," "hymns," or "songs" indifferently. So fixed, indeed, was this that it persisted in the early Greek fathers and in the second-century Greek versions of the Old Testament, that of Aquila, that of Theodotion, and that of Symmachus.

According to the interpretation of these passages here upheld, the different terms are taken as synonyms. This is certainly true in the Septuagint, where "psalm," "hymn," and "song" interchange promiscuously, where in fact the same Hebrew noun is translated "hymn" and "psalm,"<sup>33</sup> and where, in the plural as

<sup>30</sup> *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book vii. chap. 12, sec. 3; Book xi. chap. 3, sec. 8; chap. 4, sec. 2; chap. 9, sec. 6.

<sup>31</sup> They use the participle of *ὕμνέω*, a verb correlative with *ὕμνος*.

<sup>32</sup> The coincidence of the two Gospels in the use of *ὕμνησαντες* proves this.

<sup>33</sup> The word *Neginoth* is rendered "hymns" in the inscriptions of Psalms vi., liv., lv., lxi., lxvii., and lxxvi., while in the inscription of Psalm iv. it is rendered "psalms."

here, each word is an appellation for the whole Psalter. Even some who do not find in these New Testament terms an exclusive reference to the Psalter appreciate that they are synonymous, though the admission is damaging because of the generally accepted signification of "psalm" (*ψαλμός*).<sup>34</sup> That the poems of the Psalter answer in reality to each one of these terms is patent. As Dr. J. Addison Alexander said of them, "They are all not only poetical, but lyrical, *i. e.*, songs, poems intended to be sung."<sup>35</sup> They are psalms also, for their original rendition was with instrumental accompaniment.<sup>36</sup> And they are hymns in that they are intrinsically religious, embodying adoration, thanksgiving, confession, and supplication to God. So pronounced is their hymnic character that they have received the designation of "hymns" continuously from the first. The old Hebrew name of the Psalter, that of the Rabbins and subsequently that of the Talmud, was *Sepher Tehillim*,<sup>37</sup> "Book of Praises," or, as it might be paraphrased, "Hymn-Book." Then comes the early Greek usage, Biblical and extra-Biblical, already rehearsed. Succeeding centuries maintain the practice, as is seen in the Apostolical Constitutions and in the works of such Fathers as Justin Martyr, Hippolytus, Eusebius, Hilary, Athanasius, Jerome, Augustine, and Cassian. Testimonies from the Middle Ages might be multiplied at great length, but Bede, "the Venerable," gives their gist when he speaks of the whole Psalter as called "Liber Hymnorum" by universal consent. Thereafter, through the Reformation period and down to modern times, the Psalms are spoken of incessantly as hymns. And to-day, in spite of the popular cleavage between psalms and hymns, all our dictionaries, such as Webster, the Century, and the Standard, identify the

<sup>34</sup> Lightfoot, on Col. iii. 16, says: "It is quite possible for the same song to be at once *ψαλμός*, *ᾠμος*, and *ᾠδὴ*." Orello Cone says that these "three terms are essentially synonymous, and the slight shades of meaning between them are not easily definable."

<sup>35</sup> Introduction to Commentary on Psalms.

<sup>36</sup> *Ψαλμός* is from *ψάλλειν*, to play on a stringed instrument.

<sup>37</sup> From *Tehillah*, praise, song of praise.

psalms as hymns, scholarly writers<sup>38</sup> describe the Psalter as "a hymnal," "the hymn-book of the Second Temple," or "the hymn-book of the Reformed Churches," and Psalms are stitched into collections of human compositions and labeled "hymns" with the rest.

Against the ascribing of these three terms to the Psalter it is urged that "songs" (*ᾠδαί*) has an attributive in the word "spiritual" (*πνευματικαί*) which is novel, and which forbids dependence on the Septuagint in the exegesis of these passages. It is not "psalms, hymns, and songs," we are told, but "psalms, hymns, and *spiritual* songs." The objection is plausible, but it shrinks to the vanishing point and becomes a verbal quibble when the context in Ephesians is noted. The Greeks, the Asiatic Greeks particularly, were devoted to music. Song and jest, stimulated by the wine-cup, were the entertainment of the social hour, and often these were coarse and wanton. Their very religious festivals included the orgies of Bacchus and Venus, where vile phallic songs were a feature. In contrast with this wicked revelry Paul tells his readers to enliven their gatherings with the joy which the Spirit of God imparts, and to express themselves in songs which He has inspired. The answer, therefore, to the objection raised is that, while the terms "psalms" and "hymns" were marked out as consecrated, the term "songs" had become peculiarly besmirched in heathen parlance, and the Apostle adds the word "spiritual" to differentiate Christian song from all else and brand the opposite, which he has in mind, as earthly, sensual, and devilish.<sup>39</sup>

With the occasion of the word "spiritual" cleared up, it is submitted that the propriety of its application to the Psalms cannot be gainsaid. That they are the fruit of the inspiration of God, hailing from men energized by the Holy Spirit, is reiterated in Scripture,<sup>40</sup> and is evinced in the treatment accorded them by our

<sup>38</sup> Such as Ewald, Stanley, and Robertson Smith.

<sup>39</sup> Chrysostom opposes to this *αἱ σατανικαὶ ᾠδαί*, "Satanic songs."

<sup>40</sup> 2 Sam. xxiii. 2, Mt. xxii. 43, Mk. xii. 36, Acts i. 16, iv. 25, Heb. iv. 7, v. 5, 6.

Lord and His Apostles. In truth, their inspiration is perceptible, tangible. The Book carries on its front the divine image and superscription, and it is not exaggeration to say that it is the most conspicuous product of the Spirit in the bounds of the Canon. Here we abandon the defensive, and contend that this praise volume is absolutely unique in that of its lyrics alone can it be predicated that they are "pneumatic," or "spiritual," songs. Among existing hymnals there is not another in all the world which contains such songs, except as they have borrowed from the Psalter.

Again, it has been asked, Is not this triple enumeration redundant if the Psalter is made the only reference in the three terms? Why such multiplication of titles? In reply, note:

1. If there is any difficulty here, it is reduced but little by those who oppose us in the interpretation of these passages. They do not find three kinds of praise, as consistently they should do, but they stop with a twofold classification, for notwithstanding all attempts there has been failure in distinguishing "hymns" and "spiritual songs." They are able to isolate the "psalms" by themselves, but the "hymns" and "spiritual songs" remain fused and confused. As between unifying the reference of two terms and that of three, the difference is not great. If there is tautology in the one case, there is also in the other.

2. It is common in Scripture to call the same thing by different names in close connection, this in order to give a fuller and more emphatic description of it by specifying its various aspects. Paul himself resorts frequently to such cumulations.<sup>41</sup>

3. As a matter of fact, Paul's Psalter gave the Psalms these very titles, sometimes in combinations, and twice in the triple combination of these verses.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> See Ex. xxxiv. 7, Lev. xvi. 21, 1 Kg. vi. 12, 1 Chron. xxix. 19, Ps. xix. 7, 8, Ps. cxix. throughout, 2 Cor. xii. 12, Col. i. 9, 2 Thess. ii. 9, 1 Tim. ii. 1, Heb. ii. 4.

<sup>42</sup> Psalms lxxv. and lxxvi., already noticed. The only other real titles in the Greek Psalter are Ἀλληλοῦδία (*Hallelujah*) and Πρὸςευχὴ (*Prayer*). The first is an interjection or exclamation, and is found eighteen times

4. These precepts in Ephesians and Colossians have a lively and urgent context, and it is in keeping with this to suppose that their heaping of terms is, as Dr. S. D. F. Salmond says, with a view to rhetorical force.

Another objection advanced against our interpretation is, that had the Book of Psalms been meant exclusively, the definite article would have been prefixed to the three words. This article-argument is quickly met.

1. In the Greek Psalter itself the article is not used in connection with any one of these three titles, not even with the prefatory *ψαλμοί*.

2. Paul may have meant the words to be taken qualitatively. This is favored in Ephesians, where there is a tacit contrast with bacchanalian songs.

3. In New Testament Greek, as well as in classical, the article is often omitted before appellatives which denote a well-known object,<sup>43</sup> and it has been demonstrated already that these three titles were attached to a historical system of praise well known to the Apostles and the Asiatic churches.

Our exegesis of these passages now nears completion, but it must still be verified as satisfying the demands of the double context. Consider, first, the relation in the Colossian passage between the indwelling of "the word of Christ" and the singing of "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Whether such singing is to be reckoned as the mode of imparting "the word of Christ," or as the outcome of its indwelling, is immaterial at the present, for in any event the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs spoken of must be in unison with "the word of Christ," and contain it. As to the phrase, "the word of Christ," occurring here only, a documentary or literary conception of it is improbable. Let it be taken generally as the teaching of Christ, the body of truth

—Psalms cv., cvi., cvii., cxi., cxii., cxiii., cxiv., cxvi., cxvii., cxviii., cxix., cxxxv., cxxxvi., cxlvi., cxlvii., cxlviii., cxlix., cl. The second is attached to five Psalms—xvii., lxxxvi., xc., cii., cxlii.

<sup>43</sup> See Winer's New Testament Grammar, Seventh Edition, Sec. 19.



by which men are made wise unto salvation, and furnished completely unto every good work. And now, we ask, does not the Psalter gleam and glow with the saving doctrines of Christianity? Does it not, beyond the four Gospels, reveal "the mind which was in Christ Jesus"? Were the rest of the Bible destroyed, would it not preserve an exposition of the way of life sufficiently clear to save a fallen race? Is it not a true instinct which has led publishers to bind up the Psalter with the New Testament as being manifestly of kindred nature? It was Augustine, the illustrious Latin Father, who said that "the voice of Christ and His Church was well-nigh the only voice to be heard in the Psalms." Bengel spoke of the Psalter as "a remarkable portion of the Scriptures, in which the subject of Christ and His Kingdom is most copiously discussed." More recently, Franz Delitzsch, the great German exegete and Hebraist, wrote: "There is no essential New Testament-truth not contained in the Psalms." These testimonies will stand. Christ faced Himself in the Psalter; nor did He "see in a mirror, darkly"; and His Apostles, judging by the scores of their quotations, found in its odes the Messianic and evangelical element in abounding measure. The Psalter reference in these three terms conforms, therefore, to the requirements of the context, so far as concerns the phrase, "the word of Christ." Can the same be said of any rival reference? Can any pleader for uninspired hymnody maintain that in it there is a comprehensive presentation of "the word of Christ" equal to that in the Book of Psalms? It was none less than Dr. James H. Brookes, of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, who said a few years ago:<sup>44</sup> "It is difficult in any ordinary hymn-book to find a dozen hymns that are in accord with the word of Christ."

Once more. By these psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs the Colossian Christians are told to "teach and admonish one another." But since it is the usual manner of the Apostle to refer his readers to Scripture for instruction and admonition, and since

<sup>44</sup> In the magazine entitled *Truth*.

for these ends he draws heavily upon the Psalms in his Epistles, the divine praise-book is suggested at once as his only thought. Certainly, it is hymns of a definitely dogmatic, instructional type which are presupposed. And it is just here, in preceptive power and in doctrinal substance, that the Psalter hymns tower splendidly above all others. The Psalter may be religion, and not theology, as it is sometimes put, but nevertheless it has a thoroughly didactic character that is unapproached and unapproachable by lyrics uninspired.

Thirdly. In Ephesians the "speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" is the sequel of being "filled with the Spirit." Instead of the excitement of strong drink, be God-intoxicated through the infilling of the Spirit, and give vent to your joyous emotions in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. So runs the exhortation. Here again, how exactly the Bible songs correspond to such a connection. Receive the fullness of the Spirit, and then pour out your souls in the hymns of the Psalter, indited as they all are by the Spirit and redolent of His holy inspiration. The *Pneuma* and His own *pneumatic* psalm: what God hath joined together in this passage let not man put asunder.

The last clause in each passage is worthy of a moment's notice. In Colossians, according to the revised text, the singing was to be "unto God" as the Object and Auditor of praise, not to Christ distinctively and exclusively. This, as all are aware, is emphatically true of the Psalms, which, though full of Christ, and specializing Him over and over again, do not forget His organic unity with God in the essence of the Divine Being. The parallel in Ephesians reads "to the Lord"; yet there, too, as verse 20 shows, Christ is looked upon as the Mediator through Whom the sacrifice of praise is offered to Him Who is the ultimate source of blessing, "God, even the Father."

Summarizing the results of our exegesis, it has been determined:—

- i. That the "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" of these

passages included nothing that was uninspired, nor any compositions newly inspired in the Apostolic Age.

2. That they are all embraced in the Book of Psalms, this finding being based upon the impregnable testimony of the Greek Bible and Psalter used by Paul and the Pauline churches, upon the usage of contemporary Hellenistic writers, upon the witness of the Gospels according to Matthew and Mark, upon the conformity of the Psalter to this threefold characterization, and upon the fact that an exclusive reference to the Psalms satisfies every postulate of the context.

The alternative theory, though, as we believe, purely conjectural and arbitrary, has not been brushed aside in any cavalier style, for no statement in the process of exposition has been an over-statement, but has been attested substantially. If the exegesis now submitted be sound, it follows that the Apostolic Church employed the Psalms alone in the ordinance of worship, and that to restrict ourselves to them in this sacred exercise is a New Testament commandment.

Under the opposite interpretation, let it be noticed

1. That the Psalms still have the primacy, taking precedence of hymns and spiritual songs, and that most hymn-singing Churches ignore this by confining themselves to a human hymnology.

2. That the singing of uninspired hymns in worship is not barely permitted, but is explicitly prescribed, and is, therefore, binding—a contention which few would care to defend.

Among the authorities upholding the foregoing interpretation of these passages may be mentioned the following: Clement, the celebrated Greek Father who presided over the Catechetical School at Alexandria (*Paidagogos*, Lib. iii. Cap. 4); Jerome, the most learned of the early Fathers of the Latin Church (*Com. on Eph.*); Beza, the friend and ablest coadjutor of Calvin (*Com. on Col.*); John Owen, the prince of English divines in the seventeenth century (Preface to a metrical edition of the Psalms published in 1673 for use among the Independents and Dissenters of

England); Jean Daillé, d. 1670, a celebrated French Protestant minister (*Expos. of Col.*); Cotton Mather, d. 1728, the well-known New England author; Thomas Ridgley, a standard English writer on theology (*Body of Divinity, Edition of 1819, Vol. iv., p. 134*); Jonathan Edwards, d. 1758, the noted American divine and metaphysician (*Hist. of Redemption, Period i., Part v.*); John Gill, a learned Orientalist and Baptist theologian of the eighteenth century (*Body of Divinity and Com. on Eph.*); John Brown, of Haddington, Scotland, professor of divinity in the Associate Synod of Scotland, d. 1787 (*Dictionary of the Bible*); William Romaine, an eminent author of the eighteenth century in the Church of England; Walter F. Hook, d. 1875, an Anglican dean and ecclesiastical historian (*Church Dictionary*); The Encyclopædia Britannica, article on *Hymns*, by the Right Hon. the Earl of Selborne; William Binnie, of Scotland (*The Psalms: Their History, Teachings, and Use. London, 1877*); H. C. B. Bazely, of Oxford, England, d. 1883 (*Biography*); E. L. Hicks, Hon. Canon of Worcester, Church of England (*Biography of Henry Bazely*); Eduard Reuss, of Strasburg, the great Alsatian Protestant theologian, d. 1891 (*History of the New Testament*); Tayler Lewis, for many years professor of Greek Language and Literature in Union College, Schenectady, N. Y. (*The Bible Psalmody*); Philip Schaff, of Union Theological Seminary, New York City, the distinguished Church historian, d. 1893 (*Hist. of the Christian Church, Vol. i., p. 463*); and the late John A. Broadus, of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (*Com. on Matt.*).

## A SPECIAL EXEGESIS OF COL. III. 16 AND EPH. V. 19

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**T**HE passages before us are taken from two of the Epistles of Paul which are strikingly similar. These seem to have been written during the Roman imprisonment, and near the same time. They are addressed to Christian communities similarly situated, and subject to like trials and dangers. The remarkable series of parallel passages signify nothing further than common authorship, while the divergences of the two Epistles indicate local differences in the character and circumstances of those addressed. They are both doctrinal and apologetic, but as the writer in each case nears his conclusion they become more and more practical and admonitory. The hortatory sections have no liturgical intent. They are not rubrics, but constitute a program of holy living. Worship is viewed as a means of approach to God. From the human standpoint it means access to the throne of grace. Praise is a means of fellowship with God. It is at once a method of meditation and of instruction and monition.

The two passages are nearly identical. If they differ at all, it is perhaps in that the first emphasizes the meditative and the second the didactic uses of praise. In Ephesians the section to which our passage belongs consists of warnings against the lusts of the natural man, and exhortations to holy living. Avoid the evil by entertaining the good. One of the means by which we are to be filled with the Spirit is by speaking to ourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Those, too, who are ensphered and filled by the Holy Spirit give expression to their holy joy by the use of songs of praise. In Colossians the alter-

native expression is, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." "The word of Christ" is a phrase used here only in the Scriptures. Assuredly it comprises the whole message of Christ to men, as it is contained in the Old Testament and in the New. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The inspired utterances of our Apostle, the prophecies of the older dispensation, and the songs of the Sweet Psalmist of Israel are the word of Christ no less than the Sermon on the Mount. The exhortation of the Apostle is that the word of Christ "dwell in you." This implies extending hospitality to the truth. The word of Christ becomes the guest of the soul, the informing principle of the life. It makes its appeal not to the intellect only; it speaks to the heart. It claims the cordial assent of the understanding, and the free and active choice of the will. "In all wisdom" looks to the practical application of the word of Christ to the things of life. "Richly" corresponds to the "filled" of the Ephesian passage. As an important agency in this enshrinement and appropriation of the truth in Christ, the Apostle exhorts to teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

The seers of a people are often their singers. No influence had more to do with the making of Greece than the songs of Homer. The jubilate at the Red Sea, the Ninetieth Psalm, probably composed during the period of the Wandering, and the Song of Moses at the close of his great career, marked epochs in the history of the Hebrew race. They were for the instruction and warning of all the after generations of Israel. The ordinance of praise exists not merely for the expression of subjective emotions, but in a large degree for the teaching of objective truth. In no other way do the great lessons of history, devotion, and doctrine take such hold upon the imagination as when incarnate in song. It is a matter of experience that what the people sing they soon believe.

As was to be expected, the Apostle leaves no room for doubt as to the matter to be used in teaching one another in the things

of God. Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs are to constitute at once the text-book for instruction and the medium of devotion. It will be readily agreed that the voice of God speaking in the inspired Canon is the supreme authority and guide for doctrine and duty. It might justly be reasoned *a priori* that whatever is recommended therein as matter of instruction and warning would be that which would be recognized as the utterance of the Holy Spirit. This presupposition is reinforced by many evidences that the "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" of the passages under consideration are contained in the Word of God. That this threefold description should refer to a single well-known collection is quite in accord with the *usus loquendi* of the Jewish people and of the time of these Epistles. The received title of the body of Hebrew literature known to us as the Old Testament was "The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings." This was understood by all to designate a single well-defined and well-known collection. Paul, addressing the Thessalonians, speaks of man exhaustively when he says, "May your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire." "Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" no doubt described a definite body of praise songs well known to those addressed in these Epistles. That this collection was none other than the Psalms of the Old Testament appears evident from the fact that it is the only book of praises known to have been in existence then or for centuries after, and it is admitted on all hands that these were in use at the time of this writing.

That the injunction of the Apostle does not mean to *prepare* and use songs of praise scarcely needs argument. It is not supposable that he would exhort these new churches to teach and admonish one another in hymns of their own composition. He used terms that to the minds of those addressed described the Psalms of David with which they were familiar. Josephus, writing after the time of these Epistles, says: "David . . . composed songs and hymns to God." "He also made instru-

ments of music, and taught the Levites to sing hymns to God." What was the distinction in the Hebrew mind between psalms and hymns, or hymns and odes, we do not know. We do know that the lyrics of David were known by all these titles, and so designated in the Greek version of the Old Testament then in use. Dr. Charles Hodge says: "A psalm was a hymn, and a hymn a song."

That there were any other hymns in use at this time we have no evidence whatever. Two passages have been pointed out as quotations from a supposed hymnology. Of these, Ephesians v. 14 is almost certainly a loose quotation from Isaiah; but granting that it is from a Christian poem, there is no evidence that it or such compositions were used in praise. As to the passage in 1 Tim. iii. 16, if it is a quotation at all, nothing is known of its origin. The indications are that the words are Paul's own, an instance of poetic rapture characteristic of the inspired writers. To these, Fisher, strangely enough, adds 1 Peter iii. 10-12, which is a direct quotation from the Thirty-Fourth Psalm. Many authorities might be cited to show that the Christian Church had no uninspired hymnology during the first two centuries of its existence. Paul's injunction to the Ephesians and Colossians could mean but one thing, and could be understood by them in but one way: that is, that the saints should be edified by the use of the Scripture Psalms which had received the imperial indorsement of the example of Jesus.

As to the signification of the term "spiritual songs," it is generally agreed that New Testament usage would give it the meaning of songs originating with the Spirit.

The manner in which these hymns were to be used is next set forth: "singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; singing with grace in your hearts unto God." They were to be sung. That this was the design of the Davidic collection needs not to be argued. The Apostle did not deem it sufficient that the Psalms be read. Their purpose being to make



melody with the heart to the Lord, he teaches that this end is to be attained by singing. No doubt these were the "hymns to Christ" of which Pliny wrote, and the praises which Paul and Silas sang in the jail at Philippi. Whether the question of the exclusive use of the Scripture Psalms to the end of time is settled by these passages or not, they add their voice to a cumulative argument that is very strong. That they authorize and enjoin the use of the inspired Psalmody is certain. The real question is—May we, without direct Scripture warrant, make and acceptably offer other songs of praise to God?

The following inferences may be made from these exhortations of the Apostle:—

1. Praise is not sentimental only, but also didactic. It is not for entertainment, but for edification. The faith of the Church is largely determined by the songs that it sings. If the matter of praise is inspired, no one may be led into error by its use. When merely human teaching is substituted for the Word of God, the standard is lowered, and the truth endangered. It is interesting to note that the first uninspired hymns were polemic, and sowed the seeds of division in the Church. The Scriptures are the best Apologetic. When men laid aside the weapons that God Himself had put into their hands, and essayed to combat heresy with its own inventions, discord took the place of devotion, and the spirit of missions began to die. The sword of the Spirit—there is none like it.

2. When we let the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom, we are "filled in the Spirit." When the risen Saviour met with the disciples He said: "These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me." So we see His face shining in the Old Testament Scriptures. In the Law and the Prophets we read of Him; in the Psalms we sing of Him and to Him.

3. The psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs of the Davidic col-

lection are suitable matter of praise for the Christian Church. The inspired injunction of the Apostle can be understood in no other way. These are the songs that the Saviour sung, and which gave expression to His experiences in the supreme hour of His Passion. While it is agreed by intelligent Bible students that the inspired Psalmody furnishes an appropriate vehicle of praise, it is proposed to use with it human compositions of like spirit. Experience seems to show that the praises of the Church must be exclusively Scriptural, or they will in practice be exclusively uninspired. As in every other attempt at the use of a double standard, the lower drives out the higher.

4. The singing of praise is to be congregational. These injunctions are addressed to the whole people. All who need to be filled with the Spirit are to engage in the service of song. Emphasis is to be placed not only upon the musical rendering, but especially upon the right exercise of the heart; a need which is common to all.

5. The great importance of praise as a means of grace is set forth. The singing of Psalms combines prayer and instruction with the highest form of adoration and devotion. What can be so acceptable to God as the words with which the Spirit touched the lips of the Hebrew psalmists? In them the soul pants for God, cries from the depths, looks up to the starry heavens, shouts from the hills of Zion. The collection begins with the contrasted ways of the righteous and the ungodly in the First Psalm, enthrones Christ in the Second, celebrates the Resurrection in the Sixteenth, opens the two books of God in the Nineteenth, weeps with Jesus in the Twenty-Second, clasps His hand in the Twenty-Third, voices the exiles' plaint in the Forty-Second, grieves with the penitent in the Fifty-First, surveys the widening Kingdom of Messiah in the Seventy-Second, calls all the earth to worship in the One Hundredth, enters the holy of holies in the One Hundred and Third, sings with the Saviour in the Hallel, and so from height to height till it ends with a burst of hallelujahs in the closing doxology. The very order is significant. It was not

without fitness that our fathers sang them in course as they gathered morning and evening about their family altars. It was a course of instruction. It was daily admonition. It was bread from heaven. The day of revival shall have dawned when all God's people shall be found offering with true hearts the morning and evening sacrifice of praise provided by the Holy Spirit.

## THE PSALMS IN THE POST-APOSTOLIC CHURCH

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**W**ERE the Psalms of the Bible the songs of the Church in the centuries immediately following the Apostolic period? The question is wholly historical, and should be judged and adjudged by historical data, not by acute dialectics and adroit inference. Unfortunately, men not infrequently go to history, as they go even to the Bible, to justify their views rather than to adjust them. Moreover, language means one thing to one man and quite another thing to another man. Lord Brougham said that Parliament never passed a law through which he could not drive a coach and four. If this be true of a carefully prepared statute, how much easier to drive through a loosely written history, especially when that history must be read in a dead language! Accordingly, we need not be surprised at the variance of opinion as to the use of the Psalms in the Early Church. In this, as in many another question of historical fact, the truth has been obscured by partisan misconstruction or by unscholarly misconception. Detached statements or episodes have been taken out of their setting and flaunted as the testimony of history. Other portions of the record have been misinterpreted, and have thus been made false witnesses in the case. Let us then, in as impartial and judicial a spirit as possible, sift the evidence before us, and examine the grounds for our Church's belief that the history of the Post-Apostolic period supports the exclusive use of the Psalms of the Bible in the worship of God.

To do this thoroughly would require hours where we have but minutes: we must confine ourselves to a few of the salient points. We will do well, first of all, to examine the arguments

for the negative, that we may judge of their strength. On what historic grounds may be justified the introduction of an uninspired psalmody?

There are a few stock witnesses in this period whose testimony is popularly supposed to furnish such grounds. One of these is Pliny the Younger. In the early years of the second century this learned pagan was proprætor in Bithynia under the Emperor Trajan. He wrote his master for instructions how to deal with the rapidly growing sect of Christians. His letter testifies in the strongest terms to the high moral character of the followers of the new belief, giving an account of all that the writer has been able to learn of their practices of worship and of conduct. The statement with which we are here concerned is this: "They are wont to assemble on a stated day"—the Sabbath—"before daylight, and sing among themselves alternately a song to Christ as God." And this, forsooth, proves that men had been composing hymns to laud the newly discovered divinity of the Messiah, which had been proclaimed in the Songs of Zion for more than a thousand years! Why, those Bithynian Christians might have opened their Psalter at random and sung a hymn to Christ as God! Who could have furnished those suffering saints, glorying in their ascended Lord, a song that would so stir and strengthen their souls as this Psalm of David?—

"Thou hast, O Lord, with glory  
 Ascended up again,  
 And captive led captivity  
 Triumphant in Thy train.

To Thee have gifts been granted  
 For men who did rebel,  
 That so the Lord Jehovah  
 In midst of them might dwell.

Blest be the Lord Jehovah,  
 Of our salvation God,  
 Who us with blessings daily  
 Abundantly doth load.

He is the Lord, the Saviour,  
 Who is our God Most High:  
 And with the Lord Jehovah  
 From death the issues lie."

(Psalm lxxviii. 17-20.)

Origen, the great scholar and teacher who lived in the first half of the third century, is another witness often called in favor of the early use of human compositions in divine praise. Here is what he did, according to the historian Basnage: "He exhorted the people to strive by their hymns, by their psalms, by their spiritual songs, crying to God that they might obtain the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." There does not seem to be any plausible ground for doubting that Origen had in mind the Apostolic injunction (Colossians iii. 16), "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord"; and no reputable Bible student to-day would cite that passage as authority for the use of an uninspired hymnology.

Other evidence of a like trivial character might be referred to, but I must pass on to notice two historical statements found in Eusebius, which are considered of the utmost value by those who claim historic justification for the use of other than Bible songs in worship. In the arraignment of Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch, an arch-heretic of the third century, the council that condemned him made, among others, the following charge (I give the translation of Crusé, an Episcopal clergyman): "He stopped the psalms that were sung in honor of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the late compositions of modern men, but in honor of himself he had prepared women to sing at the great festival in the midst of the church, which one might shudder to hear" (Book vii., chapter 30). I submit that this passage as translated carries its own refutation. We cannot, of course, for a moment suppose that in the time-honored Psalmody of the Church Paul could have found songs to serve his evil purpose. Are we then to believe him guilty of the flagrant and foolish inconsistency of proscribing the

Psalms in general use on the score of their being modern, and of resorting thereupon to yet more modern hymns prepared to glorify himself and to insinuate his false theology? Such paradoxical behavior would openly have proclaimed the heretic bishop not only knave but fool. Turn from Dr. Crusé's rendering to the original account: "He stopped the singing of the psalms," says Eusebius,—the psalms, mark you, not the hymns,—“he stopped the singing of the psalms in honor of our Lord Jesus Christ, (*ὡς δὴ νεωτέρους καὶ νεωτέρων ἀνδρῶν συγγράμματα*), as if, indeed, they were the recent productions of modern writers.” What does such language mean, if not that Paul of Samosata's crime lay in setting aside the songs of inspiration as though they were of merely human authority, and in substituting hymns of human composition? I firmly believe that with the daylight turned upon this passage, every candid-minded student of the subject will say that instead of being a witness against, it is an effective witness for, the Songs of the Ages, the Psalms of the Bible.

The other statement quoted from Eusebius is as follows (Dr. Schaff's translation): “How many psalms and odes of the Christians are there not, which have been written from the beginning by believers, and which, in their theology, praise Christ as the Logos of God” (Book v., chapter 28). I have not the time, in the limits put upon me, to go into a radical textual treatment of this passage. Suffice it to say, its import turns chiefly on the interpretation given to the phrase “from the beginning.” From what source did the psalms and hymns of the brethren come “from the beginning”? In view of the conceded testimony of all the history of this period, it seems to me that there can be but one answer. It is a primary principle in legal interpretation that a law must be interpreted in accordance with the meaning of the language and the customs of the time when it was enacted. Applying this common-sense principle to the question before us, for the purpose of determining the real meaning of the passage, it seems to me that no candid mind with the least tincture of the

judicial instinct could fail to find in favor of the psalms and hymns of the Bible, which from the beginning of sacred song have formed the substance of the Church's praise. I am glad to be supported in this view by so eminent an historian as Dr. Schaff, whose testimony is all the more telling since he is an ardent advocate of the use in worship of uninspired hymns. In the *Works of the Nicene Fathers*, translated under his editorial supervision and bearing his imprimatur, the following note is appended to this disputed sentence: "This passage is sometimes interpreted as indicating that hymns written by the Christians themselves were sung in the Church of Rome at this time. But this is by no means implied. So far as we are able to gather from our sources, nothing except the Psalms and the New Testament hymns (such as the Gloria in Excelsis, the Magnificat, the Nunc Dimittis, *et cetera*) was as a rule sung in public worship before the fourth century,"—more than a hundred years after the passage that we are considering was penned.

But now I must turn from this side of my subject to consider the positive arguments which Post-Apostolic history furnishes for the exclusive use of an inspired psalmody. We are confronted, at the outset of this period, with a presumption in favor of the Psalms of the Bible. There is absolutely not an iota of evidence that any other songs were used in worship in Apostolic times. Hence we come up to this period with the full expectation that the Psalms alone will constitute the Church's manual of praise. Our practice of baptizing children we found chiefly on the fact that children were received into the Jewish Church. We find the children in the Church: the opponent of their admission must give a divine warrant for casting them out. Why does this argument not hold in the case of the Psalms? We find them in the Church, the divinely appointed songs of praise. Can less than a divine mandate warrant the substitution of other songs?

Not only is antecedent probability against the use of hymns in the Post-Apostolic Church, but the absence of remonstrance on the part of the early Christians is weighty evidence that as yet



there was no departure from the Church's former custom in respect to psalmody. Even in our own day we know that the matter and the very manner of the Church's praise are most delicate and difficult of adjustment and rearrangement. Though our own denomination has been using a revised version of the Psalms for more than a third of a century, in some congregations its adoption is still resisted. Were the early Christians so much milder, or so much more indifferent, that they allowed the inspired Psalms to be supplanted without a protest? We cannot believe it. To revert to the parallel with our practice of infant baptism, we maintain—and, we believe, reasonably and unanswerably maintain—that the Jewish Christians would have remonstrated in no uncertain terms had the Church as organized by the Apostles excluded their children from membership. That history records no such dissent amounts practically to proof that the children were received into the Church even as they had been under the old dispensation. The same line of argument is as legitimate and as unanswerable when applied to the subject before us. Men whose ancestors for more than a thousand years had been singing the Psalms of the Bible did not tamely and mutely submit to the substitution of hymns of human composition.

The natural inference from the lack of protest against change in the form of praise service is further borne out by total absence of Post-Apostolic hymns. In the times of persecution search was made for the books of the Christians, that they might be destroyed. The Scriptures, and especially the Psalter, are always spoken of; but there is no reference to other hymns being sought or found. Even Bingham, strongly prejudiced as he is on this subject, admits this fact in his "Antiquities," recognizes its force, and labors, without success, we think, to account for it. Dr. Schaff admits that "we have no complete religious song remaining from the period of persecution"—the first three centuries—"except the song of Clement of Alexandria to the divine Logos, which, however," he adds, "cannot be called a hymn, and was probably never intended for public use." This song is, indeed, little more than

the rhapsodic ascription to the Saviour of a succession of titles, such as in a Roman breviary is made to the Virgin. Dr. Farrar, in his *Ecclesiastical Dictionary*, says: "It is remarkable that we have no hymns of the first, and scarcely any of the second, century; and we have no certain account of the authors of hymns before the middle of the fourth century." If hymns were composed and used during this period, it may well be called "remarkable" that not one has survived, and that the name of no writer of sacred melodies has found a place in the annals of the Church. This is the more "remarkable" when we consider the voluminous quantity of other religious literature that has come down to us from the Post-Apostolic centuries. Can the absence of hymns from this literature be accounted for on any other theory than that they did not exist?

Up to this point we have been concerned merely in a negative way with the use of the Psalms in the Early Church. It is to be presumed that no other hymns would be introduced into public worship; we have record of no such opposition as would inevitably have greeted an attempt at such introduction; no hymn composed by a Christian of that time has come down to us, nor even the report of such a hymn. Let us now turn to the positive side of our subject, where we need not content ourselves with such meager findings. The frequent reference to the use of the Psalms in public and in private worship during the Post-Apostolic age witnesses conclusively to their general, if not to their exclusive, employment as the matter of praise. More than one church and provincial council forbade the ordination to office of those who did not know the Psalter by heart. Athanasius (d. 373 A. D.), the champion of orthodoxy against an Arian world, bears this testimony: "I believe that a man can find nothing more glorious than these Psalms; for they embrace the whole life of man, the affections of his mind, and the emotions of his soul. To praise and glorify God he can select a Psalm suited to every occasion, and thus will find that they were written for him" (*Treatise on the Psalms*).

Basil of Cæsarea (d. 379 A. D.) says: "The Book of Psalms is a compendium of all divinity; a common store of medicine for the soul; a universal magazine of good doctrines, profitable to everyone in all conditions."

Chrysostom (d. 407 A. D.), the illustrious Greek Father, Patriarch of Constantinople, says: "All Christians employ themselves in David's Psalms more frequently than in any other part of the Old or New Testament. The grace of the Holy Ghost hath so ordered it that they should be recited and sung night and day. In the Church's vigils the first, the middle, and the last are David's Psalms" (*Homily vi.*).

Jerome (d. 420 A. D.) states that he had learned the Psalms when he was a child, and sang them daily in his old age (*Adversus Ruffinus*).

Augustine (d. 430 A. D.), the greatest man in the Church from Paul to Calvin, says in one of his epistles to Januarius that "the Donatists"—an heretical sect of that time—"make it a matter of reproach against us, that, in the Church, we sing with sobriety the divine songs of the prophets, whereas they inflame the intoxication of their minds by singing psalms of human composition." The same great authority declares (*Confessions*, ix. 4) that "throughout the whole world the Psalms are sung." Continually throughout his writings the Psalms are referred to with appreciation and even with rapture, but I have failed to find a hint that he made use of other hymns.

Did the time at my disposal permit it, I might multiply indefinitely quotations from the Fathers to show that the Psalms of David constituted the psalmody of the Post-Apostolic period. But I must leave this wide field in order that I may bring forward another important fact which the history of this period furnishes, namely, the authoritative condemnation of hymns of human composition.

The important Council of Laodicea, which met about 360 A. D., forbade "the singing of uninspired hymns in church, and the reading of the uncanonical books of Scripture" (Canon 59).

This was not a general council, it is true—only what we should call a synod. But the Council of Chalcedon, which met almost a century later (451 A. D.), one of the largest and most important of all the ecumenical councils, confirmed this canon of the Laodicean synod. The decisions of this council the Churches East and West accepted as supreme and final. It was this council that settled once and for all the greatest conflict that ever raged within the Church—the Arian controversy. At the time when it met, and for a millennium thereafter, the ecumenical councils were held to be vested with infallibility. It follows, then, beyond the possibility of reasonable contention, that up to this time—the middle of the fifth century—whatever may have been the emotional and occasional exceptions to the rule, the Psalms of the Bible were the songs of the Church.

Other testimony of still later date is not lacking. Although, little by little, during the sixth century spiritual songs composed by distinguished church teachers, such as Ambrose of Milan and Hilary of Poitiers, were introduced among the pieces used for public worship, yet this was not done without strong opposition: and as late as 563 the Council of Braga, in Portugal, decreed that no poetic composition be sung in the church save the Psalms of the Bible.

It may be well for us to consider, in closing, just how and by whom the ancient usage of the praise service was changed. Hymns of human composition were, as we have seen, occasionally used during the Post-Apostolic period; but the purpose and the effect of these songs do not augur well for an uninspired psalmody. Bardesanes, a Syrian Gnostic in the early part of the third century, resorted to hymns of his own writing, set to catchy tunes, and by thus sugar-coating his heresy he secured for it wide acceptance. Apollinaris of Laodicea, another corrupter of Christian doctrine, resorted, in the next century, to the same method of insinuating his false views of the nature of Christ. Most noted and most noxious of all was Arius of Alexandria (d. 336 A. D.), whose name forever stands for organized

opposition to the divinity of Christ. Tried and deposed by the authorities of his church, he went far and wide, singing to attractive airs ballads of his own making calculated to catch and to corrupt the masses. His success must have surpassed his wildest dreams; for almost the entire Church was carried away from the faith for many years, and, indeed, the baleful influence of the man and his songs survives to this day. With good reason has it been said, "Let me make a people's songs, and I care not who makes their laws."

These are the most noted examples of hymn-singing during the Post-Apostolic period. These are the men who set the example of breaking away from the use of the divinely appointed Psalter, and this is the purpose for which they made the break. Gnostic, Donatist, and Arian hoped to accomplish by rhyme what they could not do by reason, and they were not disappointed. Others, notably Ephraim of Syria, anticipating the homeopathic dictum, "*Similia similibus curantur*," wrote hymns as an antidote to the poison of the heretics. But these earliest examples of well-meant hymn-making justify the sentence which Dean Farrar pronounces upon modern hymns in general: "They abound, if not in heresy, yet in false theology" ("*Lives of the Fathers*": Volume i., page 345).

We may sum up in a line the lesson which the study of this period teaches us. Those who sought the Church's purity and the honor of her Lord stood by the Songs of Zion; while the false prophets who deceived the people employed the witchery of other songs to lure men from the faith of the Gospel. Verily, in this as in every other matter "it is an evil thing and a bitter" to forsake the way mapped out by the Lord.

## THE PSALMS IN THE POST-APOSTOLIC CHURCH

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THE range of inquiry permitted in this paper is somewhat indefinite, inasmuch as the phrase, "The Post-Apostolic Church," is rather elastic in its application. It is a widespread and warrantable usage to designate the Church from the day of Pentecost, or rather of the resurrection of Jesus, till the close of the first century as "The Apostolic Church"; because till nearly the latter date it enjoyed direct Apostolic supervision. Since the removal of the Apostles the Church might literally be denominated Post-Apostolic. In fact, however, the limitation of this title to the Church of the second and third centuries of our era prevails; although a disposition is not uncommon to stretch the title so as to embrace three or four centuries later. In these circumstances I shall avail myself of all the latitude allowed by custom, or claimed by the explorers of the past, and jot down with brevity a series of observations descriptive of the place held by the Psalms in the Church from the close of the first century down even till the eighth or ninth century of the Christian era.

1. During the period indicated the Book of Psalms was recognized as a part of Holy Scripture. Proof of this position can be presented copiously, but, in the interest of brevity, is here withheld. It may, however, be mentioned as evidence of the prominent place accorded by the ancient Church to the Psalms that in a volume which lies before me of the works of Augustine there are 664 quotations from the Old Testament, or references to it, and that 281 of these attach to the Book of Psalms. It may be added that in the Early Church the fullest recognition of the inspired character of this Book prevailed.

2. In the period covered by our present survey the Psalms were not only read like other parts of Scripture, but also sung. It was perceived that this was one end, and indeed the distinctive end, for which the Book had been provided, and that to neglect to *sing* the Psalms was to disregard at once a duty and a privilege. From the accounts given by the ancient writers we conclude that the Psalms were in their days extensively sung even when there was no thought of engaging in the solemn exercise of worship, but when the purpose was to meditate on the Word of God, or to make others hear the truth embodied in the incomparable spiritual songs of the Psalter. History tells how in the early stages of the Reformation in France the singing of Clement Marot's metrical version of certain Psalms became for a season a prevalent pastime in which princes, nobles, and peasants shared, and this, too, when there was no intention to render the sacrifice of formal praise to God. In the marvelous movement by which of late Wales and, to some extent, England were affected, the singing of religious hymns was widespread among the people at their daily work and in hours of leisure, when there was no intention to engage in direct acts of worship. Exactly similar was the impulse in the Early Church to awaken the echoes with the sound of Psalms chanted in a devout spirit, yet without the purpose of rendering the sacrifice of formal praise to God. Thus, in his Sixth Homily on Repentance, the famous preacher, Chrysostom, who lived at the close of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century, extols the Psalms above all the rest of Scripture and tells that they were sung by all classes of men in all places and on all occasions, not only in church meetings, but in funeral exercises, by virgins as they plied the needle, by the ignorant who could not read, yet could repeat David's Psalms by heart. "David," says he, "is always in their mouths, not only in the cities and churches, but in courts, in monasteries, in deserts, and the wilderness. He turned earth into heaven and men into angels, being adapted to all orders and to all capacities."

3. In the Post-Apostolic Church the Psalms were not only sung, but sung in the solemn worship of God. As already suggested, there is a difference between singing a Psalm as an exercise of edification and singing it as an exercise of divine worship; just as there is a difference between reading the Lord's Prayer, even reverently, and offering it as a prayer to God. While the distinction indicated is both just and important, it is beyond reasonable doubt that after the Apostolic age the Psalms were both privately and publicly sung by Christians in the direct and solemn worship of God. Overwhelming evidence to this effect is found in the writings of Chrysostom, Augustine, Jerome, and many others. In the East and in the West, in Asia, Europe, and Africa, wherever the religion of Christ found place, this custom of singing Psalms in the worship of God prevailed. It was felt then, as it should be felt now, that the distinctive object for which the Psalter had been provided is that it might be used in worship; that to read this part of Scripture is not enough; but that in addition it is to be sung, or chanted, as a part of worship. And that these songs of Zion were so used from the Apostolic age onward through the centuries till the Great Reformation is too well attested to be denied.

4. There is no clear evidence that in the second century of our era any songs but those of the inspired and divinely authorized Psalter were used in worship by the orthodox. If songs additional were used, what has become of them? Surely some of them that had been in the mouth of martyrs in that age of persecution must have survived, being treasured in the hearts and memories of fellow-Christians who outlived the scenes of fiery trial. Yet when we ask for them, not one can be produced. Even Dr. Schaff, one of the most erudite ecclesiastical historians and most enthusiastic hymnologists, is forced to admit that from this period no hymn, aside from the Psalms, has come down to us, unless it be some snatches derived from Scripture, especially from the first two chapters of the Gospel according to Luke. In vol. ii., eighth edition, page 226, of his "History of the



Christian Church," we find the following words: "The Church inherited the Psalter from the synagogue, and has used it in all ages as an inexhaustible treasury of devotion. The Psalter is truly catholic in its spirit and aim; it springs from the deep fountains of the human heart in its secret communion with God, and gives classic expression to the religious experience of all men in every age and tongue. This is the best proof of its inspiration. Nothing like it can be found in all the poetry of heathendom." (Dr. Schaff might have added, or in all the poetry of Christendom.) "The Psalter was first enriched by the inspired hymns which saluted the birth of the Saviour of the world, the *Magnificat* of Mary, the *Benedictus* of Zacharias, the *Gloria in Excelsis* of the heavenly host, and the *Nunc Dimittis* of the aged Simeon. These hymns passed at once into the service of the Church, to resound through all successive centuries as things of beauty which are 'a joy forever.'"

The same author, notwithstanding his ardor as an advocate of the use of an uninspired hymnology, is frank enough to add, "The oldest Christian poem preserved to us which can be traced to an individual author is from the pen of the profound Christian philosopher, Clement of Alexandria, who taught theology in that city before 202 A. D. It is a sublime, but somewhat turgid, song of praise to the Logos as the divine educator and leader of the human race, and, though not intended and adapted for public worship, is remarkable for its spirit and antiquity."

Proof that other compositions than the Psalms were sung in worship by Christians soon after the Apostolic age is supposed by some to be found in a letter written early in the second century, probably 112 A. D., by Pliny, the Younger, to the Emperor Trajan. Pliny, who was governor of Bithynia, a province of Asia Minor, wrote to his imperial master the letter referred to, giving an account of some troubles which had arisen in connection with the Christian movement. The part of this letter which concerns us now is that in which the writer describes the habits of the Christian sect, particularly where he states that they

were wont "to assemble on a fixed day before it was light and to sing among themselves alternately [or responsively] a hymn to Christ as to a god." From this the inference is drawn that other hymns than those of the Psalter were at an early stage in the history of the New Testament Church used in its worship. This inference, however, is very unwarrantable; for we hold, and it was a prevalent sentiment of the ancient Church, that in the Psalms Christ is extolled as God.

Another item advanced to prove the use of uninspired songs in worship in the Early Church consists of a quotation made by Eusebius, the historian, from a lost treatise attributed to Caius, a Roman presbyter, to this effect: "All the psalms and songs written by the faithful from the beginning celebrate Christ, the Word of God, ascribing divinity to Him." Touching this quotation it may suffice to remark that the expression, "from the beginning," may mean, and, we think, does most naturally mean, from the origin of sacred song. On this supposition Caius simply declares, what we affirm, that in the Psalms Christ is extolled as God. The use of the word "psalms" lends countenance to this view.

The early use of uninspired hymns in the Post-Apostolic Church has been inferred from the terms used by the Council of Antioch (270 A. D.), in the charge which it made against the pompous and powerful bishop, Paul of Samosata, that he had banished the hymns wont to be sung in honor of Christ and introduced instead hymns extolling himself. Our limits forbid a thorough discussion of this plea; but we would briefly say that it has again and again (and never more clearly than by Dr. William Wishart, of our Church, in a newspaper article) been proved to be not only valueless for the purpose for which it is adduced, but even adverse to that end.

5. There is good reason to believe that the first to introduce uninspired hymns in worship were errorists, who sought by this means to diffuse their peculiar tenets. To this device Valentinian, a Gnostic, resorted with the purpose of giving currency

to his heterodox sentiments. This charge is brought against him by Tertullian, who flourished in the early part of the third century. The Syrian Church was afflicted at an early date with hymns produced by Bardesanes, and his son, Harmonius, in the interest of the fantastic speculations of Gnosticism.

At a later date, when the Arian heresy arose, the same method was extensively employed for promoting its spread. In the streets and in worshiping assemblies hymns imbued with Arian sentiments and set to catching music were extensively sung. The Psalms were not adapted to serve the ends of those who were engaged in a war against the dignity of Christ. Recourse was, therefore, had to the preparation and use of hymns for the diffusion of Arian doctrine. The same expedient is employed in modern times, when various sects, deserting the one central, ecumenical hymn-book, furnish themselves with hymn-books framed to express and propagate their respective tenets.

6. It is beyond question that one effect of the adoption of hymns by the heterodox, as a vehicle of their views, was to induce the orthodox to resort to the same expedient for the defense and dissemination of truth. For instance, in the Syrian Church Ephraim, commonly called "Ephraem Syrus," who died 379 A. D., wrote a large number of hymns to counteract the baleful influence of those put into circulation by Bardesanes and Harmonius aforementioned; and these controversial odes soon began to be used in the worship of that Church. In like manner in the early part of the fourth century the propagation of Arian views by hymns gave rise to a counter-movement on the part of the orthodox in the form of hymns extolling Christ as God. So also Augustine, an intense lover of the Psalms, was induced to prepare a hymn after the model of the One Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm in order to cope with the Donatists, who were diligently diffusing their tenets by means of hymns. Thus it may be said that by good motives the orthodox in the Post-Apostolic times were led to take steps which issued in the supplanting of the God-given Psalmody by uninspired effusions.

7. Even in the fourth and fifth centuries, when the Church, freed from persecution, developed rapidly in the direction of pomp and show, the Psalms held their place in worship with wonderful tenacity. They were deemed so important that candidates for the ministry were required to commit them to memory. In North Africa, with which the great name of Augustine is so closely associated, they seem to have been almost exclusively used, unless by the Donatists. In the East, as Chrysostom with glowing eloquence attests, they were sung by Christians enthusiastically. John Cassian, an ardent promoter of the monkish system, who died 450 A. D., left behind him a book descriptive of the discipline of the monks under his care, first in Egypt and afterwards at Massilia (now Marseilles), in the South of France. From this volume we learn that for a time the monks were accustomed to sing eighteen or twenty Psalms, or even more, in succession. At length, however, it was arranged that the number sung at each service, morning and evening, should be twelve.

8. The displacement of the Psalms by uninspired hymns, so far as this occurred, was not accomplished without resistance, and that especially in those sections of the Church where pure doctrine lingered longest. A few facts corroborative of this statement are here subjoined.

One of the courageous opponents of declension in the Church was Vigilantius, against whom Jerome (340-420 A. D.) directed some of his coarse sneers. One of these seems to imply that Vigilantius was devoted to the Psalms; for, after denouncing him as an antagonist of monkery, of relic-worship, of the observance of saints' days, and of prayers for the dead, Jerome flings at him the reproach that "amidst jovial feasting he would only entertain himself with the Psalms of David."

It is worthy of note that protests against the employment of uninspired hymns in worship continued to be made when the light of truth was fast fading away and the gloom of Romish apostasy was settling down, as a pall; and that this antagonism was most strenuous in those regions where resistance to the ad-

vancing tide of corruption was most determined. In the North of Italy along the great Alpine range, in the North of Spain, where stretches the rugged range of the Pyrenees, and in the South of France, where at a later day bloody crusades, organized by popes, were hurled against the poor people who held the truth, repugnance to mere human hymns and attachment to the Psalms as matter of praise lingered latest.

The tract of country just indicated might be called "the evangelical belt" during the dark centuries, where the truth found a shelter when driven from other parts. Of this region that valiant Vigilantius aforementioned was a native. Here also lived and labored Claude, or Claudius, a Spaniard, who, as bishop of Turin, contended boldly against the rapidly growing tendency to the invocation of saints and the worship of images and relics, together with other forms of superstition. Here also we find Agobard, archbishop of Lyons (who died 841 A. D.), maintaining a heroic struggle against the growing superstition and expressing his desire that in worship no songs should be used except those found in the Psalter, or, at least, in the Bible.

As further evidence of the spirit which survived in this comparatively orthodox region it may be stated that in a provincial council held in Braga in Portugal, in the year 563, it was decreed that "beside the Psalms or canonical Scriptures nothing be sung in the churches." About the date of this council a strong effort was in progress looking toward the admission into the church services of hymns composed by influential bishops, particularly Ambrose and Hilary; and hence in another council, or synod, held in Toledo in Spain in the year 633, the question of permitting in the church services the use of hymns was brought forward. By this time the innovators had gained in strength, and they secured a decision favorable to their cause. It is clear, however, from the action of the Toledo Council that hymns had till then, at least in Spain, been mere beggars for admission; for, in the argument to sustain its action, the Council does not assert that any collection of uninspired hymns had ever been used in the

church services, but only that it had been customary to sing the doxology and a few Scripture canticles chiefly pertaining to the birth of Christ. The Council could point to no hymn-book that had been sanctioned by the Church as a substitute for the Psalter, or a rival of it. And here it may be mentioned as a kindred suggestive fact that in the record of the terrible Diocletian persecution in the early years of the fourth century, a persecution directed against the books, as well as against the bodies, of the Christians, while reference is often made to the seizure of copies of the Bible and of the Psalms, no hint is given of the capture of a hymn-book or of a prayer-book.

In closing this paper, a few sentences, chiefly of recapitulation, may be allowed:

*First:* It is beyond reasonable doubt that in the early centuries after the disappearance of the Apostles the Psalms constituted the chief hymn-book of the Church.

*Second:* There is no clear evidence that before the end of the second century uninspired hymns were employed in worship by the orthodox.

*Third:* Considering that even during the time of the Apostles grave irregularities existed in the Church, it would not be wonderful if in the department of song improprieties had arisen.

*Fourth:* The promoters of heresy were the leaders in the production and introduction of hymns.

*Fifth:* The desire to counteract error contributed to the production of hymns and the employment of them in worship.

## THE SUITABLENESS AND SUFFICIENCY OF THE PSALTER FOR CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

BY PRESIDENT J. A. THOMPSON, D. D., TARKIO, MO.

**W**HO questions the suitability and sufficiency of the Psalter for Christian worship? The question is found in the sphere of the Church's practice. A large part of the Christian Church has abandoned the use of the Psalter in the praise service; another large part makes small use of it. Dr. Archibald Alexander Hodge was accustomed to tell his classes that the United Presbyterian Church had been raised up in the providence of God to keep the Psalter before the Church. In the fulfilment of its destiny the United Presbyterian Church finds it necessary to champion the suitability and sufficiency of the Psalter for Christian worship.

What is the formal worship of God? It is outward expression of an inward attitude toward God. It may assume several forms. It is seen in prayer, in praise, in preaching, in the sacraments, in giving, and in fasting. These forms may be divided into two general classes. In all cases the "form" of worship is prescribed in God's Word. No one would think of attempting the formal worship of God in any way not prescribed in His Word. In prayer, in fasting, and in giving the "matter" is not prescribed other than in general terms. We may give to God anything that has value to us. We may fast for any one of a great variety of reasons. We may pray for any one of a multitude of things. "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Tim. ii. 8). "Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1

Thess. v. 17, 18). In the sacraments and in praise the "matter" is prescribed to men. No orthodox Christian would think of substituting anything for the bread and wine which the Master used in ordaining His Supper. Whatever disputes Christians may have over the mode of Baptism, they do not dispute over the use of water as its symbol. In preaching we have the combination of the prescribed and the voluntary. It is in part instruction concerning God derived from His Word and in part testimony concerning our own experience of God. Praise belongs to that type of worship based entirely upon what God has revealed of Himself and of man. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me" (Ps. l. 23). God must reveal Himself as a foundation for praise. "O Lord, open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise" (Ps. li. 15).

There has been no change in the basic idea of praise. The eternal God remains the same. He is "the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Evangelical Christians agree in the belief that the Canon of revelation is closed. God has accomplished His purpose with men in revelation. There is no need for further revelation. The completion of the Canon has been definitely and finally declared. In completing the Canon God did not deem it necessary to add to the book of praise after the period of the Exile. Every feature of worship had been provided for in the Psalter. Christianity did not claim to be a new religion. It was the fruition of the religion of the Old Testament. The Jehovah of Israel's prophets and the Father of our Lord are one and the same. Christianity has no new principle of praise worship to offer. It changed the form of the sacraments to meet new facts in the history of religion. It has given new vitality to prayer and clearer interpretation to praise. It has nothing to add to the character of God, nothing to tell of His relation to men which had not already been uttered by the Holy Ghost through the men whom He had inspired of old.

The Psalter was prepared and inspired for use in the praise



service of the Church. No other portion of Scripture has any appearance of having been prepared for such use. The Psalter assumes this claim. It has not been denied. No one affirms that any other part of the Canon has been prepared for permanent use in the service of song. The title of the Psalter in the Hebrew, as in the Greek, assumes this purpose. "*Sepher Tehillim*" signifies "a book of praise songs." "*Mizmor*," the title of many individual Psalms, implies a portion prepared for singing. The Psalter is filled with the language of praise. "Bless Jehovah, O my soul"; "Praise ye Jehovah"; "Oh, sing unto Jehovah a new song," are phrases constantly recurring in the Psalms.

Every believer in the inspired Bible accepts the Book of Psalms as a part of the Canon of Scripture. He believes that God is the author of the Psalter. David and Asaph and Moses and Solomon and Ethan and Heman and others penned these Psalms, but the Holy Spirit guided their pens. He is their real Author. When we recall this, and also that there are no other books of praise of which any Christian believes God to be the author, it becomes sacrilegious to call in question the suitability and sufficiency of the Psalms for Christian worship. We have found that the place of song in worship is to exalt God. In order to exalt Him we must know Him. "Canst thou by searching find out God?" To whom can we turn for a revelation of God sufficient for purposes of worship but to Himself? Praise demands such a knowledge of God that we should feel the need of a divinely inspired book of praise even before its publication. How much folly men have been guilty of in their attempt to supply such a book even after all the revelation of God made in His Word!

The variety of topics dealt with in the Psalter commends it as suitable and sufficient for use in Christian worship. If one has not studied the Psalms topically he will be amazed when he is told of the great number of topics with which they deal. In a very slight analysis, such as is made in Nave's Topical Bible,

there are thirteen different heads under which the Psalms are classified. The Psalter published by the United Presbyterian Board of Publication, in an analysis confessedly incomplete, finds ninety-two classes of topics dealt with in the Psalter. The Bible Songs, published by the same Board, finds one hundred and fifty-four topics, with important subheads under forty-six of these. The Book of Worship published by the Lutheran Church contains two hundred and sixty-five topics with very few subheads. It might be a question whether such topics as "Conferences and Synods," "Confirmation," "Consecration of Churches," "Dedication of Churches," "Election of Pastors or Church Officers," "Marriage," "National Hymns," etc., lie within the sphere of worship proper. An examination of the Psalter shows that it contains material for use in praising God in private devotions or in family worship morning and evening, in the Sabbath school, in the prayer-meeting, and the church service. I may assume sufficient familiarity with the Psalter on the part of those who read this paper to make it unnecessary to quote in proof of the statements made here with reference to it. It contains praise for the Father, for the Son, and for the Holy Spirit. It contains suitable expression for adoration, confession, petition, praise, and thanksgiving. It has material for use in times of sorrow and of joy, of deepest despondency and of highest hope, of fear and of cheerful confidence, of temptation and of victory over temptation. It encourages the young and vigorous, and comforts the aged and feeble. It gives comfort to those in poverty, and advice to those whom God has blessed with riches. It far outruns the most advanced Christian in its missionary spirit and promise. It sets before Christ's Church the glorious culmination of missions, when "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." It anathematizes sin and glorifies righteousness. It honors the house of God, the day of God, and the Word of God. It anticipates the teaching of the Master with reference to faith, hope, and charity, justice, mercy, and righteousness.

Its pages sing of the enemies of righteousness and of their destruction. They sing also of the blessedness of the righteous and of their final honor. They magnify the communion of the saints. The Psalter tells of hell and of heaven, of retribution and of reward, of judgment and of mercy. It contains consolation for the sick and dying, prayers for those who are helpless, and thanksgiving for recovery from sickness. It is an inspired writer who advises those whom he addresses, "Is any merry? let him sing Psalms." Is there any sphere of song demanded in Christian worship which the Psalter does not supply? I have heard the Psalter criticised by one who had been trained to sing Psalms from childhood because of its supposed insufficiency for the use of children. This was years ago, when the Church had not yet studied the Psalter with a view to its musical possibilities. When this study was begun it was found that there was an abundance of material in the Psalter for the use of children. The criticism of this earnest Christian worker should have been of the music which we once used with the Psalms, not of the Psalms. The Church has supplied the deficiency in some measure. There is still much to be done toward supplying suitable music for use with the Psalter among the children. Its versatility adapts the Psalter in a peculiar manner for use in the Sabbath schools. It has somewhat for all classes of Bible students. It certainly saves the Sabbath schools of those Churches which use it from the reproach which falls so heavily upon the silliness into which uninspired song for children has surely degenerated.

Some critics have objected to the use of the Psalter in Christian worship because it speaks of Christ and of His work only in anticipation, and because it uses the language of Old Testament symbolism when it does deal with the facts and teachings of Christianity. It might be sufficient answer to these critics that the Holy Spirit, the best judge of the suitability of material for Christian worship, has not seen fit to provide any material for use in the praise service since the coming of Christ in person. That fact will at least suffice to suggest that the Holy Spirit had

good reason for completing God's Canon of praise before the Son of God became incarnate. May it not have been the purpose of the Holy Spirit to emphasize the "eternal now" in which the Godhead dwells, to keep us of the latter day mindful of the great truth that "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," that "the same was in the beginning with God"? May this not be the divine way of teaching the Church that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and forever"? There is a majesty about that conception of Christianity which adapts its worship to the ages of the ages, which permits Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Moses and Samuel and David and Elijah and John the Baptist and John the Beloved Disciple and James and Peter and Paul and Augustine and Calvin and Knox and all the saints of all time to join in one grand pæan of praise, of which the Author is the Master of the musicians Himself.

The Psalter has proved its suitability and sufficiency for Christian worship in the experience of men. Our Lord set the example for His Church in the service of praise as in everything else. Our Lord made much use of the Psalter in His teaching and preaching, as do Christians of every name. More than seventy distinct references to it are made in the record of His work as given by the Evangelists. Their reports show that no other Book of the Old Testament is referred to so often by our Lord. Only once do we have any direct reference to a praise service in which our Lord took part. In Matt. xxvi. 30, duplicated in Mark xiv. 26, Jesus and His disciples are represented as singing together a portion of the Hallel, Pss. cxiii.-cxviii. His use alone of the Psalter should insure its use by His Church through the ages of the ages. The lips of our divine Master not only read, but sang, the words which His Spirit had composed.

In the inspired record of the Apostolic Church there are numerous references to the praise of God. In Acts ii. 47 the infant Christian Church is mentioned as "praising God and

having favor with all the people." The lame man whose story is told in the third chapter of Acts, and whose healing caused so much of excitement among the Jewish dignitaries, is said to have entered the temple "walking and leaping and praising God." Paul and Silas in the inner dungeon of the Philippian prison were "praying and singing hymns unto God" when the earthquake shattered the thick walls of their prison and loosed the chains which bound them. There are references to the service of praise as a familiar part of God's worship in those well-known passages in Ephesians v. 19 and Col. iii. 16. We have no reason whatever to think that any of these passages refer to the use of any other praises than those voiced by God in His own Book. It would be irrational to think of anything else being used or even thought of in formal worship in the temple, the common place of worship during, and following, the Pentecostal period.

The oldest uninspired Christian hymn of which we have any knowledge is that of Clement of Alexandria, composed about 200 A. D., characterized by Dr. Schaff as "a sublime, but somewhat turgid, song of praise to Christ." The use of uninspired hymns did not become general until the close of the fourth century. The uninspired hymn was introduced by those who had peculiar views to exploit. Its spread was quickened by the spread of heresy and by the degeneracy of the Greek and Latin Churches.

A revival of the ancient use of the Psalter came with the Reformation of the sixteenth century. In Germany, in France, in Switzerland, in Scotland, and in Ireland the use of the Psalms was almost universal in the Reformed Churches. It is only fair to add that they did not all use the Psalms exclusively. Savonarola went to the stake in Florence singing the Forty-Sixth Psalm. Luther's dauntless courage at Worms was stimulated by the stirring music of the same glorious Psalm. Huss's martyr soul and the life of the gentle Melancthon went out while the words of God's own songs were upon their lips. The Waldenses in

Italy knew no other music during the centuries of their struggle for religious liberty. The Huguenots marched to victory behind the white plume of Henry of Navarre, or sank to death with the noble Coligny on St. Bartholomew's Day, singing the Psalms to Marot's music. The words of God's songs were in the mouths of our Scottish ancestors, alike as they signed the covenant with their own warm blood in Greyfriars' Churchyard or sealed the same covenant with martyr blood under the trampling hoofs of the "bluidy Clavers." Let it not be forgotten that the men who withstood the butcher Alva in the cities of Holland, and whose Dutch obstinacy wrung victory from the best efforts of Spain, were men who sang Psalms. The Psalter has taught those who used it to die for Christ's crown and covenant. Under its heroic spell even gentle women have suffered the loss of all things for Christ's sake. Its words have inspired to missionary zeal and missionary courage since the days of the Apostles. It has actually served God's purposes for worship for generations of godly Christians. To-day those who stand for the exclusive use of God's inspired Psalter in worship may everywhere be counted upon not only to defend and extend the truth, but to take a hand in every genuine effort for reform.

Finally, every attempt to improve upon the Psalter has been compelled to resort to the Psalter for its basic elements. The Church of Jesus Christ to-day knows no canon of praise other than that established by the divine Psalter. In multitudes of cases the very words of uninspired hymns have been suggested by the divine Psalter. The oldest Christian hymn extant, that of Clement of Alexandria, to which reference has already been made, begins "Shepherd of tender youth." Its metaphor is that of the Twenty-Third Psalm. Watts called his best-known and most-used hymnal "The Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament." "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I" and its succeeding stanzas, "I will dwell in Thy tabernacle forever, I will take refuge in the covert of Thy wings" (Ps. lxi. 2, 4), are the mighty originals which suggested

Toplady's "Rock of Ages, cleft for me." "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God" might well have attuned the soul which inspired "Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee." There is nothing good in the poetry of uninspired praise which has not been anticipated in God's praise-book, the Psalter. The best thing which can be said of the modern hymnals is the fact that they do so closely imitate the Word of God.

To sum up: the worship of the true God is essentially the same in all ages. Christian worship does not differ in its essential from the worship offered by Abraham.

The Psalter was prepared and compiled for use in the worship of praise. Its author was God. His knowledge of Himself and of man gives Him infinite superiority over any merely human writer of praise.

The Psalter deals with a variety of topics amply sufficient to supply any possible demand that may be made upon it for purposes of worship.

The Psalter has proved its suitability and sufficiency for Christian worship in the experience of the Church during many centuries and under many conditions.

Every attempt to improve upon the Psalter has been compelled to resort to the Psalter for its basic elements.

I know no surer index of the suitability and sufficiency of God's own holy words for Christian worship than to ask you to listen to a number of our Lord's own precepts, and then to these same precepts as anticipated and summed up in the most tender verse of the Psalter, the best beloved in the experience of Christ's little ones. Listen! "I am the good Shepherd" (John x. 11). "But seek ye first His kingdom, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. vi. 33). "I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (John x. 9). "For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life:

and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Rev. vii. 17).

"The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.  
He makes me down to lie  
In pastures green; He leadeth me  
The quiet waters by.

My soul He doth restore again;  
And me to walk doth make  
Within the paths of righteousness,  
E'en for His own name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through death's dark vale,  
Yet will I fear no ill,  
For Thou art with me, and Thy rod  
And staff me comfort still.

A table Thou hast furnished me  
In presence of my foes;  
My head Thou dost with oil anoint,  
And my cup overflows.

Goodness and mercy all my life  
Shall surely follow me,  
And in God's house for evermore  
My dwelling place shall be."

"The Shepherd Psalm" did not reach the fullness of its meaning until our Lord had said, "I am the good Shepherd."



## THE SUITABLENESS AND SUFFICIENCY OF THE PSALTER FOR CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

BY THE REV. JOHN A. HENDERSON, D. D., ALLEGHENY, PA.

**T**HE very first concern in this discussion is to have the right conception of what Christian worship is. Christian worship is the formal showing forth of the character and works of God by the observance of appointed ordinances, whereby men offer to God true homage, adoration, praise, confession, thanksgiving, and service, and all this through Christ Jesus, Whose mediatorial work furnishes the only ground of acceptable approach to the Divine Being, and all this also for the sole purpose of honoring God and enjoying His favor. It will be readily agreed that no other kind of acceptable worship by men is, or has ever been, possible, since sin entered into the world, than that just defined as Christian worship. Old Testament saints worshiped God through Christ no less certainly than did New Testament saints, or than do we, the former through the prophetic Christ and the latter through the historic Christ. In this view, the true worship of all dispensations is Christian worship. Of necessity it is the same thing essentially from first to last.

As God has made provision for men in all ages to come near to Him in salvation-experience through Christ, so has He made adequate provision whereby they may approach Him with acceptance in every feature of appointed worship. He has directed men to pray to Him, and has told them how to make their prayers. He has directed them to sing to Him, and has told them, not how to make their songs, but where to find them ready-made to their hand. He has directed men to make their offerings of worldly wealth, and has placed His own image and super-

scription upon the tithe. He has directed them to give to Him a share of their time, and has specified as holy unto Him the seventh part. Christian worship, then, is just simply to follow God's directions in our approach to Him for the purpose of declaring His glory and obtaining His favor. Obedience, indeed, is the essence of such worship. Nothing can take its place, however good in itself the substitute may be; for "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

The question just now is as to the suitability and sufficiency of the Bible Psalter for such Christian worship. There are two facts which form a substantial basis for such a claim: *First*. God gave the Psalter for use in Christian worship. *Second*. Multitudes of devout saints have accepted the Psalter from God for such use, and have found it suitable and sufficient. The former of these facts, if made out, amounts to a demonstration of the claim. The latter of these facts does not reach an equal height in importance and value, but is strongly corroborative of the claim.

Let me urge attention to the former fact, namely, that God gave the Psalter for use in Christian worship. The very fact that God prepared the Psalms to serve an appointed purpose is presumptive proof of their suitability and sufficiency—proof which amounts to almost a demonstration. The demonstration becomes a positive one to clear knowledge and unquestioning faith. It is only ignorance and doubt that wait to see the print of the nails. When God gave the Psalter, He did so in order to meet the needs of His worshiping people. Evidently the Psalter came to be what it is by a process of gradual growth, by the compilation, finally, out of the material at hand, of a collection for permanent employment by the Church as its matter of praise. It is not our contention that this Book contains all the songs that God ever gave for His people's use in their approach to Him. It is quite possible, as alleged by some, that in the earlier history of divine worship by men there were songs given by God for temporary use, which, for good reasons, were

not preserved in the collection we call the Psalter. This collection, which is the Hymnary of the Church Universal, is what it is, therefore, by the "survival of the fittest," determined, not through natural, but supernatural, selection. The Psalter is therefore a development under divine supervision, as is the entire Bible, and at all stages in its development its full adaptation to the end designed must be taken for granted. The Psalter was completed several centuries before Christ. No change, to make it suitable and sufficient, was deemed necessary in the time of Christ and His Apostles. When God finished making the Bible itself, which was not till near the close of the first century after Christ, it was without doubt designed to meet the demands for a divine revelation for all time. In completing this written revelation to the world and the Church, there were added, after Christ, sections of history, biography, epistolary instruction and exhortation, and even prophecy; but it will be observed that there is not to be found any book of New Testament lyrics in order to complete the divine provision for the matter of praise. No more "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" were provided. Why this omission? Was it an oversight on God's part, to make amends for which modern hymn-writers are to be invoked? By no means. God knew what He was about when He completed the Psalter. When it was finished, compiled in its present form, it was just as He wanted it; and so it needed no amendments or addenda to fit it for permanent use by the Church of Christ. These are the wholly suitable, all-sufficient "spiritual songs"—the songs that the Spirit has edited, and so must be possessed of infinite adaptation.

The second fact mentioned as strongly corroborating our claim is that multitudes of devout worshipers have accepted the Psalter for its divinely appointed use, and have found it suitable and sufficient. Human judgment or experience is not the criterion by which to settle absolutely a question like this. But where such judgment and experience coincide with the mind of God in an actual test of His appointed provision, it is worthy

to be noted as very encouraging to the faith of those who are seeking to follow the divine directions. Clearly the Psalter has long been used for Christian worship. As to such use it had no competitor in Old Testament times. Nor was there anything to divide the honors with it in New Testament times, or in the early centuries following. Indeed it was not until comparatively recent times that any serious attempt was made to displace the Psalter by substituting for it man-made songs. It is clear from the history of the movement that the displacement of the Psalter as the matter of praise began, not in an effort to satisfy a feeling or conviction as to its want of suitableness and sufficiency, but rather in the well-laid plan of a disturbing element to introduce heresy into the doctrinal views of the Church. This led the conservators of the true teaching to seek to bring to bear a counter-influence by resort also to man-made songs. Herein was the first serious error. But it was a strong temptation, and their yielding should be regarded charitably. They thought the ark of God was about to be overthrown, and this act was the presumptuous putting forth of the hand, Uzzah-like, to steady it. The motive was good, but how far-reaching and disastrous to the cause of the purity of worship was the result of that zealous but unwise act. Sectarian hymns began to abound. The desire to emphasize many controverted points of doctrine led to the wide extension of the use of human hymns in the song service of the churches, so that in these present times the songs of men have come to take the place of the songs of God in by far the larger part of God's great family. In thus attempting to do battle for the cause of truth, which was the worthy professed purpose of these soldiers of the cross, we cannot but feel that they, to a large extent, played into the hands of the enemy, and thus weakened, rather than strengthened, their defense of fundamental doctrine. God's warriors did not remain in their God-given citadel, the impregnable fortress of truth—the divine Psalter, but went out into the open, to fight after the manner of the enemy with rudely constructed implements of their own devising.

This discrimination against the Psalter was not at first an expression of adverse judgment as to its suitability and sufficiency for Christian worship; it was rather an acknowledgment that it was not well adapted for use in a sectarian squabble.

But what of these multitudes who have used the Psalter for Christian worship, and have found it suitable and sufficient? Who are they? Not to mention the pious Jews, whose discovery of the Messiah in these songs, sung by them for centuries before Christ, made their worship distinctly Christian, I would name, first of all, Christ and His Apostles. It is scarcely disputed by anyone that the Psalter furnished them their matter of praise. It furnished the song with which they closed the first Holy Communion service. It is more than probable that it afforded the material for that memorable midnight praise service in the jail at Philippi. This use of the Psalter by Christ and His Apostles is more than corroborative of its claim to be suitable and sufficient for Christian worship. - It is authoritative. The example thus furnished determines positively, not only the question of its adaptation—its suitability and sufficiency, but also the question of its divine appointment for Christian worship. Christ's use of it sets the seal of His approval upon it as just the thing for Christian worship. We may be sure He did not make use of it as an imperfect praise-book, nor permit His Apostles to do so just because He could do no better. He was under no such embarrassing necessity. For He Who multiplied the loaves and fishes, made the dumb to speak, the blind to see, the lame to walk, and the dead to live, was entirely competent to have formally provided other songs, or to have raised up and inspired for that purpose one or many sweet psalmists of the new Israel. He did neither, for the reason that there was already at hand the song-book that was both clearly appointed and fully adapted for Christian worship. "He Who could have inspired every disciple to have been a David," says Lightfoot, "sang the Psalms of David." What was then so fully suitable and sufficient to meet the needs of Christ and His Apostles ought certainly to do

a like service for those in subsequent times who would aim to be like Christ.

Moreover, there is very clear evidence that the Church in the early centuries did follow the worthy example of Christ and His Apostles, and found also in the Psalms material suitable and sufficient for their presentation to God as an offering in worship. The same may be said of the practice of the Reformed Churches after the Reformation, and down to within a very few generations. There is reason to believe that Knox and Calvin sang nothing but the Psalms. Even Luther, we are told, whose followers were among the earliest to wholly set aside the Psalter by substituting human compositions, "had the Psalms translated into the language of the people, and encouraged the practice of congregational song." The Huguenots sang them for many generations, and their martyrs died for the name of Jesus with these songs on their lips. Our Scotch and Irish ecclesiastical ancestors voiced their praises in these God-given lyrics, as our ecclesiastical cousins across the sea largely do to-day. The whole family of the Churches of the Reformed faith stand professedly for the suitability and sufficiency of the Psalter for Christian worship, as shown by their revered ancient declarations of faith, which authorized the singing of Psalms, and made provision for no other praise-book. There are, besides, a few well-known bodies of devout Christians to-day that by their adherence to the exclusive use of the Psalter in worship add to the long line of willing witnesses, and to the weight of the testimony, to the fitness of the Psalms for the purpose which they have served so long. Our own United Presbyterian Church, with her 140,000 communicants, is one of the best-known of these witnessing bodies.

But supposing that all these have used the Psalter in praise, and used it exclusively, what of it? What bearing has the fact on the question at issue? Much in at least one important way. As corroborative of the conclusion reached by arguments, the value to be attached to all this array of facts as to the use of the

Psalter in history and at the present day is not small. It is an exhibit, at least, of how certain competent witnesses regard the Psalms as the matter of praise in worship. I have said "competent witnesses." The character of a witness has much to do in determining his competency. What of the Reformers, the martyrs, the Huguenots, the Scotch Covenanters—the people who have not counted their lives dear unto them when the question of maintaining the purity of worship and doctrine was involved? What of the Churches that have stood by the divine Psalter? What of their intelligent grasp of the Scriptures? What of their doctrinal stability? What of their moral stamina? What of their spiritual experiences and attainments? We will let the questions answer themselves.

The claim for the suitability and sufficiency of the Psalter for Christian worship has been thus established and corroborated. It remains to illustrate briefly from the Psalter itself the important features of its adaptation to Christian worship in our day. Notice, first of all, as to the Psalter, that God is its theme. There is no other Book of the Bible, and certainly no human song-book, that so lifts God into view as does this Christian Psalm-Book. Open the Book at any point, and you are at once introduced to God, Jehovah, as the great theme.

"To Thee, O Lord, I lift mine eyes,  
O Thou enthroned above the skies;  
As servants watch their master's hand,  
Or maids by mistress watching stand,  
So to the Lord our eyes we raise,  
Until His mercy He displays."

"O praise our Lord where rich in grace  
His presence fills His holy place."

"I know the Lord is high in state;  
Above all gods our Lord is great;  
The Lord performs what He decrees,  
In heaven and earth, in depths and seas."

“Give thanks to God, call on His name,  
 To men His deeds make known;  
 Sing ye to Him, sing Psalms, proclaim  
 His wondrous works each one.”

Notice again, as an absolutely essential feature of the Psalter's suitability and sufficiency, that the heart of the Psalter is Jesus Christ. We do not read Christ into the Psalms; He is there. The use of these songs for centuries before Christ fired the Jewish heart with Messianic hope. How much more do our hearts warm toward Him as we sing:

“Thus hath said the Lord Most High,  
 I will publish the decree:  
 Thee I own My Son, for I  
 Have this day begotten Thee.

Fear His wrath, and kiss the Son,  
 Lest ye perish from the way  
 When His wrath is but begun.  
 Blest are all that on Him stay.”

The Christ that is in the Psalms might be brought to view in many similar selections. As suggested by someone, we do not need a Psalter that is more Christian, but only a more Christian use of the Psalter already in our possession.

Notice, further, that the Psalter represents God's thought about sin and its consequences. The human heart, which “is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked,” is known only to God. And God has tuned David's harp to musically express this divine insight. Listen to this minor note:

“That there is not a God the fool  
 Doth in his heart conclude;  
 They are corrupt, their works are vile,  
 Not one of them doth good.

Upon the sons of men the Lord  
 From heaven looked abroad,  
 To see if any one were wise,  
 And seeking after God.



They altogether filthy are,  
 They all aside are gone;  
 And there is none that doeth good,  
 No, not so much as one."

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"The wicked's sin doth cause this thought  
 Within my heart to rise,  
 Undoubtedly the fear of God  
 Is not before his eyes."

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"The wicked even from their birth  
 Estranged are from the way,  
 And, speaking lies as soon as born,  
 They wander far astray."

Notice that the judgment of God upon the impenitent, which has so small a place in human songs, finds adequate expression here. For example:

"God shall not build, but them destroy,  
 Who would not understand  
 His mighty works, nor yet regard  
 The doings of His hand."

The adaptation to Christian worship of the so-called "Imprecatory" Psalms is seen in their suitability and sufficiency to express the harmony of thought between the true worshiper and God as to His righteous judgment upon sin. Speaking of the impenitent, the incorrigibly wicked, the rebel against God, and the persecutor of His people, the Psalmist says:

"And when by Thee he shall be judged,  
 Condemned then let him be;  
 And let his prayer be turned to sin  
 When he shall call on Thee."

Only the deeply spiritual mind, lifted to the plane of God's thought, will appreciate the adaptation of such a song for presentation to Him in worship. The low plane of much religious thinking leads multitudes to displace such a song as this with the rhythmic vaporings of mere sentimentalism.

But how rich, indeed, are the Psalms in the exhibit of God's thought for humanity, His love and mercy toward the penitent. For illustration:

"Thy tender mercies, Lord,  
 To mind do Thou recall,  
 And loving-kindnesses, for they  
 Have been through ages all.

My sins and faults of youth  
 Do Thou, O Lord, forget;  
 In tender mercy think of me,  
 And for Thy goodness great.

God good and upright is;  
 The way He'll sinners show.  
 The meek in judgment He will guide,  
 And make His path to know."

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"Since better is Thy love than life,  
 My lips Thee praise shall give;  
 I in Thy name will lift my hands  
 And bless Thee while I live.

As when with fatness well supplied,  
 My soul enriched shall be;  
 Then shall my mouth with joyful lips  
 Sing praises unto Thee."

Observe, further, that in the Psalms the highest aspirations and richest Christian experiences of the soul are fully voiced. Just a hint as to how suitable and sufficient the Psalms are at this point may be gotten from the following:

"As pants the hart for cooling flood,  
 So pants my soul, O living God,  
 To taste Thy grace.  
 When unto Thee shall I draw near?  
 O when within Thy courts appear,  
 And see Thy face?"

“Lord, hear my voice, my prayer attend,  
 From earth’s remotest bound I send  
 My supplicating cry.  
 When troubles great o’erwhelm my breast,  
 Then lead me on the Rock to rest  
 That higher is than I.”

Then let us think of the “Shepherd Psalm,” with its expression of assurance in life and triumph in death, opening as it does with the beautiful imagery of the oriental shepherd life,

“The Lord’s my Shepherd, I’ll not want,”

and closing with those matchless lines with which many a soul has plumed itself for its flight to glory,

“Goodness and mercy all my life  
 Shall surely follow me,  
 And in God’s house for evermore  
 My dwelling-place shall be.”

The strong ethical element of these psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs makes them eminently suitable and sufficient for “teaching and admonishing one another” touching the Christian life. Their missionary and evangelistic utility, their doctrinal completeness, and their Christian spirit throughout, as sweetly catholic as John xvii., might be as strikingly illustrated, showing the suitability and sufficiency of the Psalter for Christian worship.

When we reach the golden age of the Church, when God’s people will be one, there will be a demand then for a Hymnary that will be fit for universal use, without a note of sectarianism in it. The Psalter of divine inspiration and authorization alone will answer that demand.

Our plea will fall in vain upon the ears of some. The suitability and sufficiency of this Hymnary will not be apparent to those worshipers who have only a scrappy Bible, or to that pulpit whose message is without an atonement, and without a

rigid ethical standard. We cannot undertake, either, to prove the adaptation of the Psalter to meet the demands of the diseased and depraved tastes of Sabbath day worshipers whose souls during the week, and up until late Saturday night, are in a whirl of bewilderment with the myriad voices of worldly ambition and carnally indulgent pleasures.

To those, however, who would know God, and declare His glory; who would find their highest delights in the contemplation of His infinite excellences, and His marvelous works, especially His mercies through Jesus Christ, which are over all His works; to those who would be in sympathy with all God's thinking; to all these, the intelligent, devout, persistent, and exclusive use of the Psalter in the praise of God is the best proof of its suitability and sufficiency to that end.

When the Psalms are thus used diligently in public and private worship, as appointed, namely, to set forth the perfections of God, His plans and works, the condition of man and the divine remedy, God's great grace and the deepest human experience, then, and not till then, will their suitability and sufficiency be positively demonstrated to any soul; then, and not till then, will the Psalter become in Christian experience, as it really is, and as one says of it, "a vast wide mirror sea in which to bathe one's weary soul."

## THE THEISM OF THE PSALTER

BY THE REV. J. K. McCLURKIN, D. D., PITTSBURGH, PA.

WHEN we open the Book of Psalms we listen to music that has cheered this world through three millenniums; we read songs which, chanted or sung, have awakened the melodies of Zion for almost three thousand years. During this period every form of earthly power has been crumpled up and thrown aside as a worthless garment. From the ruins of Babylon and Nineveh the owl, the bittern, and the jackal give us the dying refrain of departed greatness. But the songs that sprang to the lips of the shepherd from the plain of Bethlehem are to-day thrilling more hearts than ever before. That music, awakened by the movings of the Spirit, although bursting into the midnight darkness of ancient degradations, and although condemning the sins of humanity, has lived on and on, until now a greater number than ever in the sacramental host of the militant Church are learning to love its measures.

But the Psalter is not only long in its reach through time; it is also broad in its touch, wide in its sweep. The Psalms in the breadth of their catholicity speak to all classes. Here we find the deepest moan of penitence, the highest rhapsody of hope, the warmest glow of love, and the most abiding joy of faith. Truly has it been said of David the Psalmist: "His harp was full-stringed, and every angel of joy and sorrow swept over the chords as he passed. For the hearts of one hundred men strove and struggled together in the narrow continent of his single heart." We are all familiar with eulogistic quotations from great men concerning the Psalms. Athanasius calls the Psalter "an epitome of the whole Bible." Augustine asks, "What is there that may not be learned in the Psalter?" Calvin says:

“Here are drawn to the life all the emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated.” Lamartine has said: “The heart of David has opened to the heart of all humanity. A chord of his harp is found in all choirs.”

In the times that touched the Apostolic Age the Psalms of David were used by the masses. The vine dressers, the plowman, and the reaper of the harvest made, says Jerome, the country resonant with Psalms. Chrysostom testifies that in the churches, at the funerals, among the women spinning at home, and in the deserts, David was “first, midst, and last.” Every reader of history knows that the Waldenses sang the Psalms in their mountain homes. They were the battle hymns of the Huguenots. The Covenanters sang them as they gathered in martial rank. The Puritans of the *Mayflower* brought their Ainsworth Psalm-Book to the New World. The songs that first awoke the Western land of freedom were the songs of the Psalter.

Whence, then, this power? Where shall we find the secret of the power to live through all ages, to reach all classes, to touch all hearts, to reign in all lands? The plain of Bethlehem where the shepherd boy lived is one of the sweetest spots on earth. But other poets have grown up amid scenery as beautiful and impressive. In a word, no environments of David's life will explain the miracle of the Psalter. Some seek a solution by turning to the Mosaic system as the inspiration of the Psalms. But the inner communion of the soul with God is very much fuller and closer in the Psalms than in the first Books of the Bible. So deeply do the words of the Psalter enter into the Christian life that of two hundred and forty-three actual quotations in the New Testament from the Old Testament, one hundred and sixteen are from the Book of Psalms. Speaking of this Mr. Gladstone says: “The words of the Psalter dwell in the heart and in the center of the heart.” Others seek an explanation of this power in our sympathy with the writer in his peculiar circumstances. But how often God has put the historical setting of the Psalm

beyond the reach of the most patient and scholarly research. I think that God has thus wisely hidden away forever the historical background of many a Psalm in order that the devout soul to the end of time may make the experience either of trouble, joy, or deliverance its own personal heritage. It is no longer David that speaks. It is the echo of the human heart that we hear. Professor Moulton has said: "Could I know with positive certainty that the Third Psalm was wrung from David by the agony of the flight from Absalom, it would appear less beautiful to my mind than it does at present, when the simple significance of its words brings home to us a weary sense of oppression, tempered only by the thought of a protecting God, Who will hear and answer." Neither the life of David, the Law of Moses, nor the incidents of history will explain the spiritual power of this Book.

We ask again, Where shall we find the secret of this power? We affirm in answer: It lies in the truth that God is the central sun around which the whole Psalter revolves. The secret of the Psalter's power is the one unquestioned fact that it was written by those not only to whom God spoke, but before whom God was revealed, those who were not only inspired to record, and whose words are infallibly accurate, but who were also spiritually illuminated. The keynote that never dies out is this: From God, Before God, With God, For God. The deepest longing of the Psalmist's heart is to be in fellowship with God. "Like as the hart desireth the water brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God." "My soul is athirst for God, even the living God." The glory of God is the final goal toward which the eye of his faith and love is turning constantly. The Psalter is a pentateuch. It is divided into five books. Each book closes with a doxology. The climax in each is a shout of praise to God. Thus, for example, ends the third book: "Blessed be His glorious name forever. Let the whole earth be filled with His glory." Dean Church has fittingly said: "In the Psalms we see the soul, conscious of the sweetness and greatness of its

relations to Almighty God, longing, thirsting after the glimpses that visit it of His goodness and beauty, awestruck before the unsearchableness of His judgment, silent before the certainty of His righteousness, opening like a flower to the sun in the presence of His light and of the immensity of His loving kindness."

The Psalter is Monotheistic. Speaking in a polytheistic age, and in the midst of polytheistic peoples, it emphasizes the truth of one God in carefully chosen phraseology. "Among the gods there is none like unto Him." "He is the God of gods." "He is the King of all the earth." "O praise Jehovah, all ye nations."

The Psalter is Trinitarian. Without doubt, this doctrine is not here presented in its later fullness. Surrounded by polytheists, and the Hebrews themselves being constantly inclined to polytheism, God gave them a special truth to maintain in the face of the heathen world. It was the oneness of Jehovah. Only after the unfolding of long ages, not until the light of the Incarnation had shone forth, was this doctrine of the Trinity revealed in its full-orbed beauty. Yet the heart and the fundamentals of this truth are all in the Psalms. We have the revelation of the first person of the Godhead: "He shall cry unto Me, Thou art My Father, My God, and the Rock of My salvation." We have the revelation of the Spirit as God: "All the host of the heavens were made by the breath of His mouth." His Spirit is the creator of physical life. Speaking in the One Hundred and Fourth Psalm of the leviathan, of creeping things, and beasts great and small, the singer says: "Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created." His Spirit fills all with His presence: "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" The Spirit is presented as the quickening source of all that is good within us. Therefore the prayers of the Psalter plead, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." "Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness." In the Psalms we have the revelation of the Son as God. In the Second Psalm He is promised the heathen as



His inheritance, the utmost parts of earth as His possession. Judges are to fear Him. Kings are to worship Him. Christ Himself appropriates to Himself the words of the One Hundred and Tenth Psalm, representing the Son as an eternal priest and king exalted to the right hand of God. The influence of such Psalms, portraying a divine conqueror, cannot be easily measured. To such Messianic songs, Mr. Gladstone has shown, was due the fact that when the Greeks had overrun the East, and the Romans had conquered it, an expectation as remarkable as it was clearly defined took possession of all classes, an expectation that out of little Palestine would come a world conqueror and deliverer. The message of the Messianic Psalms had gone through the Septuagint to other nations and had stirred the world. Be this as it may, the message of the Psalter to us is that of the triune Jehovah—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The first three Psalms give us the key to the whole Psalter, the promises of God, the government of the Son of God, and faith in the protecting power of God. This theistic key will unlock the whole Book.

Let us stand for a moment before the Psalter and note how the Book is like a burning bush, aflame with thoughts of the attributes of our God. The Eighth Psalm takes us out under the wonders of the mighty heavens and shows us the glory of the great Creator. Then it points us to a higher glory, the glory of God revealed in a human character, a human life that is crowned with His likeness and wields on earth a power that comes only from God. The theism of the Eighth Psalm is God, the Creator.

Daniel Webster was once asked for his sublimest thought. The answer of the great statesman was: "The starry heavens without and the moral law within." But David anticipated this when in the Nineteenth Psalm he sang: "The heavens declare the glory of God." Then turning to the moral world he adds: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul."

That nightingale of the Psalms, the Twenty-Third, has as the

keynote of its sweetest melody the one abiding fact, "Thou art with me." The theism of "The Lord's my Shepherd" is the abiding presence of Jehovah: the Lord "beneath me, beside me, before me, behind me, and beyond me."

In the Twenty-Ninth Psalm a thunderstorm breaks. The lightnings flash, the thunders peal, and the billows of the great Mediterranean roll. Above it all, like a solemn refrain, is heard the voice of Jehovah. The theism of the Psalm is Jehovah, the God of majesty.

The very acme of sublimity is reached in the Fiftieth Psalm. God is seated upon the throne universal. Fire and tempest are the fringe of His robe. Heaven and earth are listening. Saint and sinner are in His presence. The theism of the Fiftieth Psalm is the climax of the ages, the culmination of the dispensations: God the Judge upon His throne.

In the Sixty-Eighth Psalm God is seen marching in triumph through the wilderness. Sinai trembles. In attendance are the chariots of God, thousands upon thousands. The earth shakes. The heavens drop at the presence of God. The whole scene is a masterpiece among the lyrics of earth. The theism of the Sixty-Eighth Psalm is the hope of this sin-cursed world: our God, a conqueror.

Turn now to the Ninetieth Psalm, the song that came from the pen of Moses, the great Lawgiver, the statesman, the general, the prophet, the man who abode with God amid the glories of Sinai hemmed in by the curtains of His throne, the man who spoke with God face to face. Truly this song comes from the unseen Holy of Holies. What theme will suffice? Man, the noblest work of God, is set before us as the withered grass, the fading dream, the passing shower. But, lo! the theme rises. We are now in the presence of One Who was before the mountains were brought forth, Whose years are from everlasting to everlasting, and in Whose sight a thousand years are but a watch in the night. The theism of the Ninetieth Psalm is Jehovah, the same yesterday, to-day, forever, God eternal.

The great Humboldt says, "To our surprise we find in the One Hundred and Fourth Psalm the universe, both heaven and earth, sketched with a few bold touches." But it is a picture that hangs upon the presence of the all-powerful Jehovah, Who maketh the clouds His chariot, Who walketh upon the wings of the wind, Who looketh on the earth and it trembleth, Who toucheth the hills and they smoke. Link the message of this Psalm with that of the One Hundred and Thirty-Ninth: "Thou art acquainted with all my ways. The darkness and the light are both alike to Thee. If I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou are there," and we have a message never more needed than in the twentieth century, a message that speaks with divine directness to the politician in his graft, to the business man falling before temptation, and to many a life which in these rapid days is drifting upon the reefs of sin. It is the message of a God omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient.

Cords of love have always drawn the hearts both of old and young to the One Hundred and Third Psalm. The music is infinitely tender. I quote from Charles Spurgeon: "This One Hundred and Third Psalm appears to me as the highest peak in the divine chain of mountains of praise. It glows with a ruddier light than any of the rest. It is as the apple tree among the trees of the wood. It is a song on the mount, answering to the Redeemer's Sermon on the Mount." A Father is present in the life of His child, satisfying his mouth with good things, healing all his diseases, removing his transgressions as far as the East is from the West, and crowning him with loving kindness and tender mercies. Every benediction in this mount of praise points us upward to the matchless theme, the Fatherhood of God. It is not strange then that many a child of God, when going home to the Father, has breathed out his soul on the words of this Psalm. It is not strange that the spirit of the seraphic young Renwick, from the scaffold in the Grassmarket, fled homeward on the wings of these words,

“Such pity as a father hath  
Unto his children dear,  
Like pity shows the Lord to such  
As worship Him in fear.”

Before each of us the mystery of death will soon open. We are all passing onward and away with rapidity. What, oh what, does the limitless future hold in store for us? We lift up our eyes unto the hills whence cometh our aid, and we catch the message—The Lord, thy keeper, thy shade, thy sleepless guardian, “shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and even for evermore.” Plainly the theism of this One Hundred and Twenty-First Psalm is God our refuge through all eternity. It is the germ and the prophecy of the new song to be sung in the upper sanctuary, when all the dangers of earth have fled and gone: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain . . . for Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood.”

Thus, behind all the sweetness of the melody, the charm of the drapery, the beauty of the expression, the sublimity of the figure, and all the varied colorings of emotion and experience, stands the great Gibraltar of the Psalter: God revealed; His attributes made luminous to the faith and love of the believer.

## THE THEISM OF THE PSALTER

BY THE REV. A. M. CAMPBELL, D. D., ST. LOUIS, MO.

**I**S God much in the thoughts of the writers of the Psalms? In every Psalm, without a single failure, whether it be written in gravest measures and by scholarly hand under the shadows of thundering Horeb in the far South, and in the ages out of which no other song survives, or whether poured out of a soul hiding from immediate and appalling danger in a cave near Philistine borders, or whether written in the most carefully balanced lines and rhythms of a poet-artist in the calm and quiet of a royal palace-chamber after the battles are won; or whether the mourning passion of a patriot in exile—in every one of these songs, without fail, God is spoken of or to. In one hundred and forty-one of the one hundred and fifty Psalms the very first breath or verse of each one speaks to or of God! It is even yet more; for twenty-four of these songs deliberately speak of God in every verse, and the One Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm, with its one hundred and seventy-six verses, fails in only one verse. Verily, if one is to read the Psalms in public, he must read carefully, to avoid a seeming irreverence in multiplying the use of the divine names and attributes.

In these songs God is not only everywhere present, but He is also seen in many forms. In the writing of the Psalms the Holy Spirit employs several men, whose different conditions in life color their apprehensions of God. In the lifetime of the one man who is so much used of the Spirit that his name covers the entire Book of songs there is a wholly exceptional range of experience. He lives an obscure and lowly life, and then comes into the white light that beats upon a throne. He is a fugitive hiding in caves, with death only a few steps away, and again

he is a popular idol around whom the whole enthusiasm of a great people swells in a mighty tide. Out of deeps of humiliation, with his face on the ground, he cries for mercy, and again there are hours of confident exultation. To such a variety of life, God, in all the fullness of His nature, comes to His child. Does the Christian heart feel itself misunderstood? Here is the omniscient One Who sees not as man seeth, but looketh upon the heart. Are great temptations imperiling? Here is the Almighty One to deliver. Is your heart at times put into a panic lest wickedness prevail? God is not mocked. Men may conspire and take counsel against Him, but He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh. He is near in His patience to wait, in His compassion over weakness, in His mercy to forgive, and in His justice and power to thwart treacheries.

What a list of names for God is employed in these songs to get some appreciable apprehension of what all God is. He is called Jehovah, the self-existent and self-sufficient One. He is Elohim, the creator, the active power. Lord, also, is He, sovereign King, with absolute authority over all. Most fittingly is He called Most High, not more on account of kingship than gloriousness of nature and person and nobleness of character. There is also a wealth of appellations which the devout soul multiplies in an effort to get some worthy expression of its appreciation of Him. Hear the eager heart in one single verse trying to express its crowding thought of Him in such a piling up of names in rapid utterance that before it can finish it has run out of breath—"The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my strength, my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower" (Ps. xviii. 2).

While the manifoldness of God is thus a comfort to the heart of the saint and a warning to the sinner, this manifoldness is all embraced within the larger thought of the oneness of God. In a number of instances in the Psalms the word "gods" is used, but never with consent to the idea that they are real gods, but only a reference to common thought among the heathen

around: "Confounded be all they that worship graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship Him, all ye gods" (Ps. xcvi. 7). There is not for a moment any thought of God being only one of many gods, or a tribal or national god, such as other nations claim. Indeed, throughout the Psalms Jehovah is far too large, and with too much of majesty, and from too distant an eternity, to be thought of as only one of many. Even in the name with plural form, Elohim, there is oneness; for this name is followed by a verb in the singular. It may contain a suggestion of the plurality of persons in the Godhead; yet is there but one God.

In the Psalter is the fullest recognition of the activity of God in the entire physical world—in the heavens and in the earth and in the seas, and the power and wisdom and goodness of God, as shown forth in and through nature, are the themes of much praise. The winds and the snow and the hoar frost and the ice and the cold are all brought out of His treasures. He wraps Himself in a cloud or in light, and then makes the clouds His chariot in which to go forth, and the sky is bowed down as He descends to the earth. Doubtless to a Moses and to others, among the hoary and mighty mountains, and meeting God in clouds and thunder-riven heights, the impressions of His power and majesty are so profound that when they come to speak of Him they think of the hills and mountains. "The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord" (Ps. xcvi.). "Thy righteousness, O God, is like the great mountains" (Ps. xxxvi.). "The strength of the hills is His also" (Ps. xciii.). "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God" (Ps. xc.). And no doubt to a devout heart, caught out in a sudden storm, and compelled to take quick refuge in some cave from the fierceness of the tempest, as he looks out and sees the tough-fibered cedars twisting and breaking, and rocks split asunder, and divided flames of fire chasing down the valley, while the voice of the Lord in awful power rolls and

thunders, the sense of the divine presence and majesty become overwhelming, and the great tempest Psalms, the Twenty-Ninth, and parts of the Eighteenth and the One Hundred and Fourth and the One Hundred and Seventh, are needed for any adequate expression of the deep and abiding impressions experienced. "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters! The God of glory thundereth! The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars—and shaketh the wilderness!" Over against such stormy days or nights, it must be a peaceful night, when the sky is clear and full of stars, and the peace of a well-spent day is in the heart, that is reflected in the Eighth Psalm. "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou art mindful of him?"

It is a surprise to us that inland men—and the writers of the Psalms are inland men—should write so much, and with such intense vividness, as well as accuracy, of storms at sea. Apparently the memories of those epochal events, the Flood, and the opening of the Red Sea and the rushing Jordan, lie very deep in the hearts of Israel through all the after ages. And the minds of the poets of the nation are not only filled with the wonder-stories from the lips and writings of the generations of Israel, but also the Spirit of God speaks in and through them. Who but the Spirit of God, with knowledge of the treasures of waters out of which at desire God, for full forty days and nights, could pour forth water for the deluge, could employ such an expression as this, "He layeth up the deeps in storehouses" (Ps. xxxiii. 7)? It must be with a little laugh in his heart, and a light running rippling raillery against the boasting sea, and the headstrong Jordan, that the singer challenges them concerning their defeat—"What aileth thee, O thou sea, that thou fleest? Thou Jordan, that thou turnest back?" (Ps. cxiv.). In the next breath the raillery is gone, for the sense of the awful majesty of those dread nights returns, and the singing heart cries—"Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord." At



another time the singer is looking forward, instead of backward, and ten centuries in the future he sees a vision of a sudden storm on an Eastern sea, and the experienced, but now helpless, boatmen are crying aloud in their terror, when One rises from His pillow and says, "Peace, be still," and there is a great calm: and thus he tells what he sees—"Thou rebukest the raging of the sea—when the waves arise Thou stillest them" (Ps. lxxxix.). Nor can anyone sing the One Hundred and Seventh Psalm, with the New Testament open before him, without seeing that tempestuous night when the Lord walked on the waves—"Then they cry unto Jehovah in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still—so He bringeth them unto their desired haven." What a picture of supreme control, and who other than the Spirit of God could paint it, or even suggest it—"The Lord sitteth upon the flood"! (Ps. xxix.). Many early Greek philosophers appealed only to Nature for proof of deity. It is still a fact that many will not accept direct revelation by God, but, like Thomas, require some physical demonstration as testimony. So it is profitable for us not only to hear the testimony of Jesus in His Word, but also to do as the man of faith in the Psalter, who sees God present and in control throughout the universe, keeping it in its courses, and with most fatherly heart making all things above, around, and below us work together for the good of His children.

The Psalter sings of God as sovereign Lord of all. "God is King of all the earth. God reigneth over the heathen" (Ps. xlvii.). We may consent to that authority, as the child of God does, and with him say, "My times are in Thy hand"; or, as the wicked in the Second Psalm, we may deny His authority, take counsel together against Him and His Anointed, and try to break His bands asunder, and cast His cords from us. But whether we wish it or not, His throne is firmly established; there is no unseating Him, nor running away from His hand. "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever" (Ps. xlv.). It is a

corollary of this sovereignty of God that if He wishes He may make choice of any one nation to be nearer to Him than any other. As a matter of fact He has thus chosen one people to be especially His interest, and this not because of any peculiar righteousness in them, but purely out of His sovereign grace. And the Psalms never weary of singing of this covenant God of Jacob, the Shepherd of Israel. There is a large employment of appropriating pronouns, by which the true children of Israel in all ages take possession of Jehovah as their very own. He is "our God," "my God," the God of the covenants with our fathers. To the supreme Lord all men are responsible for their manner of living, and will be strictly called into account by Him. He is judge, and a righteous judge, Who will clearly distinguish between right and wrong, punishing the wicked and rewarding the righteous; nor is there any escaping His balances. "The Lord shall judge the people." "He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world in righteousness." "Thou renderest to every man according to his work." "The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment." So righteousness pays. Whether it does or not is distinctly asked, and as distinctly answered: "Jehovah, who shall sojourn in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh truth in his heart" (Ps. xv.). "Who shall ascend into the hill of Jehovah and who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; he shall receive a blessing from Jehovah, and righteousness from the God of his salvation" (Ps. xxiv.). God's fullness of power and His certain justice bring trustful peace into our hearts. We, too, can say, with some poet,

"God's in His Heaven; All's right with the world."

From the teaching that God discriminates between righteousness and wickedness it is not far to find that He sometimes shows Himself in human affairs with providential punishments and

deliverances, and also that He shows a daily care of all His creatures.

The Psalter abounds in "enemies." The word itself is a frequent one. There are enemies to God, as in Psalm ii., and enemies to God's Church and people, as in the so-called Imprecatory Psalms, and so much of the time the individual child of God finds himself beset with temptations and dangers. How true is all this to our own life, and how much more fully is it seen in the life and death of our Lord! So many of the Psalms are born in dark days. And it is ever true that the songs of such birth are the sweetest and most soul-reaching that men have. They touch the deepest chords of our own being, and therefore vibrate the tenderest and longest. Some of the cries for deliverance from enemies and temptations are very short and piercing, not at all like the leisurely prayer of the Pharisee, but embodying the publican's soul-agony—"Be merciful to me, O God." And in such crises God answers swiftly. Such is the providence of God in the Eighteenth Psalm: "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. In my distress I called upon the Lord: He heard. . . Then the earth shook and trembled; . . . He bowed the heavens also, and came down; . . . He delivered me from my strong enemy; . . . He brought me forth also into a large place." More tender is it to us to know the constancy with which our Lord takes care for, and of, all His creatures: "I laid me down and slept; I waked; for the Lord sustained me" (Ps. iii.). "He that keepeth thee will not slumber. The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. . . . The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in" (Ps. cxxi.). "The eyes of all wait upon Thee; and Thou givest them their meat in due season" (Ps. cxlv.). How different is all this concern and care, as set forth in these songs of the sanctuary, from that misconception of God which puts Him afar off! Nay, our God is at hand and carries our interests; and the Psalmist is satisfied only when he has God

with him, even as we should be satisfied only when He is our friend and near at hand.

How preëminently fitted now are these songs for the praise service in the sanctuary! Their whole thought is Godward. They think of Him and talk of Him in every song and nearly every verse; they know Him in manifold forms and through a great range of experience; they speak of Him as ready in all His attributes to meet the varying needs of the human soul, and of all creation; and yet they never see Him so low in rank as to be only one among gods, but the one only God, Who is actively present throughout all creation, revealing Himself not only through direct word, but also through all nature as it speaks of power and wisdom and grace and judgment and mercy, the King of kings, the supreme sovereign, Who very tenderly deals with a chosen people as His very own, and yet rules with entire justice over all, and as judge holds all to strict account, manifesting Himself in swift punishment and deliverance as occasion calls, and constantly bearing the burdens of all creatures. In all these ways is God held up before the mind of the singer, flooding his soul with praises unbounded.

As praise, distinguished from prayer and preaching, is Godward, where could there be such a body of songs so filled with thought of Him and honor for Him, and so fitted for the giving of real praise in the service of song, as these Songs of the Ages, the Psalms of divine inspiration?

## CHRIST IN THE PSALMS

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**I**T is axiomatic that a perfect Book of Praise must deal much with both the fact and the method of salvation, and that in praise we shall most magnify the redeeming love of God when our songs lead us to thought of Jesus Christ, the perfect manifestation of divine grace. Since all our approach to God is through Jesus Christ, and all the divine conferments are made in His blessed name, a Christless Book of Praise would be but a censer without incense, and a harp from which the strings of noblest notes have been broken. That true praise is the worship of the Triune God is set forth by the benediction words of John to the Seven Churches of Asia: "Grace to you and peace, from Him Who is and Who was and Who is to come; and from the seven spirits that are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, Who is the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth." Indeed, it is the Christward element of worship that is emphasized in the succeeding words: "Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood; and He made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever."

Much has been said about the absence of Christ from the Psalms, and the need, therefore, of songs presenting Him. There is much that is tender and seemingly commendable in this desire for fuller statement as to Christ's person and work in our songs; but when we find that in our Saviour's time the failure to see Christ in the Old Testament Scriptures was because of blindness, we may ask whether modern failure to find Him in

the Psalms may not be attributable to the same cause. Our Lord certainly found the Psalms filled with references to Himself. He quotes David's words from the Psalter to show that David called Him Lord, and that therefore He was more than David's Son. In the quiet of the Upper Room with His disciples, in those precious hours after His resurrection, He emphasized His place in the thought of the whole Old Testament, saying, "These are My words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me." There follows the declaration, "Then opened He their minds, that they might understand the Scriptures; and He said unto them, 'Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all nations.'"

That Spirit-anointed eyes will find Christ in the Psalter is revealed by the testimony of New Testament writers. When Paul writes to the Colossians, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God," and immediately adds, "And whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him," he affirmed the close relation of Christ's word and Christly deeds with the Songs of the Psalter. When the author of the Hebrews desired to give instruction concerning the superiority of Christ to all angels, the reality of His incarnation, the superiority of His priesthood, and the doctrine of His ascension to the right hand of Power, he considered the Book of the Psalms as the source of authority. Of seven quotations from the Old Testament in the first chapter of the Hebrews, six are from the Psalter. To prove the relation of Christ to the Father, he quotes Psalm ii. 7: "Thou art My Son; This day have I begotten Thee"; and again, Psalm lxxxix. 26, "I will be to Him a Father, And

He shall be to Me a Son." To prove Christ's superiority to all the angels, he quotes Psalm xcvi. 7: "And let all the angels of God worship Him;" and again the declaration of Psalm civ. 4, connected with Psalm xlv. 6, 7, where it is said that while God maketh "His angels winds, and His ministers a flame of fire," He saith of His Son, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; And the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom." He shows from the One Hundred and Second Psalm that Christ is before all creation, in the words, "And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning didst lay the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Thy hands." That He is to be eternally exalted is proven from the One Hundred and Tenth Psalm, where God says in reference to His exaltation, "Sit Thou on My right hand, Till I make Thine enemies the footstool of Thy feet." Again he quotes the Eighth Psalm, describing Christ's union with humanity, in that He made Him a little lower than the angels; while again, in the Twenty-Second Psalm, he proves that Christ is not ashamed to call us brethren, "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, In the midst of the assembly will I praise Thee."

Thus in detail do the Psalms portray the mission and work of Christ. The New Testament refers to thirty-eight Psalms at least in which Christ is found. In these every truth concerning His person and offices and life are clearly revealed. Every name by which He is known is found or implied here. He is termed Prophet, Priest, and King of His people. His divinity is affirmed in the passages already quoted, and to these we might add explicit references to His gentle and gracious ways; to His poverty and persecution; to His triumphant entrance into Jerusalem; His trial and His violent death; to His resurrection, ascension, and outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon men. In the language of Dr. Joseph Kyle, "Thirteen Psalms cluster around the Cross. The betrayer and traitor are described in Psalms xli. and lvi. The terror of those who made arrest of Jesus is described in Psalm xxvii. 2. His desertion by friends is recorded in Psalms

lxix. and cxlii. The alliance of Herod and Pontius Pilate is fore-shadowed in Psalm ii. The testimony of false witnesses is referred to in Psalm cix. 1-5. The silence of Christ before His accusers is mentioned in Psalm xxxviii. The piercing of hands and feet; the parting of His garments; the casting of lots on His vesture; the cruel curiosity of the multitude; the mockery of the priests and others who were hostile, are all described in the Twenty-Second Psalm. His cry of anguish, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' is from the same Psalm; while His last words, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit,' is from the Thirty-First Psalm and the fifth verse. Of the five Scriptures which are especially mentioned as having been fulfilled on the occasion of His death, three are from the Psalter. The parting of His garments is from the Twenty-Second; that concerning the vinegar and gall from the Sixty-Ninth, and the sparing of Jesus from the crushing blow that brake the legs of the thieves is the fulfillment of Psalm xxxiv., 'A bone of Him shall not be broken.'"

Surely Jesus is in the Psalms, and if our eyes are but opened we shall find glorious description of His person and offices. Turning to the Psalms termed Messianic, we find such minutiae of detail concerning His person and work as to make us wonder whether those who speak of a Christless Psalter have ever earnestly conned its pages. Do we think of His advent? There is for us a Christmas carol in Psalm xl., just where the author of the Hebrews found it when he wrote of Christ, "Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, 'Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, But a body didst Thou prepare for Me; In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hadst no pleasure': Then said I, 'Lo, I am come (In the roll of the book it is written of Me) To do Thy will, O God.'" Do we think of His gracious life, as He moved, the sinless One, among sinners? Then we may sing the words of Psalm xlv.: "Thou art fairer than the children of men; Grace is poured into Thy lips: Therefore God hath blessed Thee for ever. . . . Thou



hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness: Therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee With the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." Would we sob forth the minor music that recounts His crucifixion? Then we have the Twenty-Second Psalm, where almost every detail of His torture is delineated. Would we think of His triumph over death, and His coming forth from the grave with its key at His girdle, and the light of eternal morning on His brow? We can turn to the Sixteenth Psalm, singing of His triumph, "My flesh also shall dwell in safety. For Thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol; Neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life: In Thy presence is fulness of joy; In Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Do we think of His ascension, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? We can sing in the Sixty-Eighth Psalm, "Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led away captives; Thou hast received gifts among men, Yea, among the rebellious also, that Jehovah God might dwell with them." Following Him to His glorious coronation, we can sing with the angels that swept through the heavenly portals the words of Psalm xxiv. 7: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; And be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors: And the King of glory will come in." Waiting for His return to earth, when He "shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for Him, unto salvation," and crying with John of Patmos, "Amen: come, Lord Jesus," we can sing with the inspiration of faith the words of Psalm l. 3, 6: "Our God cometh, and doth not keep silence: A fire devoureth before Him, And it is very tempestuous round about Him. He calleth to the heavens above, And to the earth, that He may judge His people: Gather My saints together unto Me, Those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare His righteousness; For God is Judge Himself." Would we celebrate the glory of His millennial reign? There is the Seventy-Second Psalm, the song of the King of Whose reign we can say, "In His days shall the righteous flourish, And

abundance of peace, till the moon be no more. . . . His name shall endure for ever; His name shall be continued as long as the sun: And men shall be blessed in Him; All nations shall call Him happy." Thus do the Psalms sweep in their scope of praise from the advent of the Redeemer as Bethlehem's Babe until His sovereign scepter shall be extended in blessing over all the earth.

The Psalms that belong to Christ may be divided into three classes, those subjectively, objectively, and ideally Messianic.

The subjectively Messianic Psalms are those in which the Spirit of God spake through the author in behalf of Christ, and furnished a music to fit His life of service, persecution, passion, and triumph. In speaking of Psalms as subjectively Messianic, it is not necessary to suppose that the consciousness of David or any other author was extended to someone yet unborn, but rather to recognize the Holy Spirit as the Author of these Psalms, and to perceive that He carried the vision of the author into the realm of Messiah's life. To assume that each Psalmist-author must have for range the narrow limits of his own experience is to place a limit upon the range of the Psalter that does not belong to other Scripture. Was not Peter speaking of the prophetic Psalms, as well as of other prophecies, when of their wider meaning he wrote, "Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them"?

Of the subjectively Messianic Psalms there are five, the Sixteenth, Twenty-Second, Fortieth, Sixty-Ninth, and One Hundred and Ninth. In the Sixteenth Psalm the Holy Spirit voices the trust of Jesus Christ in His Father; describes His joy in the Father's service; defines His anticipated triumph over death, and His entrance into pleasures that are for evermore. Peter,

in his Pentecostal sermon, shows how these words were not the soliloquy of David's own heart, but the words of Christ.

The Twenty-Second Psalm is also subjectively Messianic, in that no other person than that of Christ can be the center of its experience. It portrays Christ in the darkness of His desolation, when the hosts of evil shut out the light of God, and wrung from His heart the bitter cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" It portrays the scorn and mockery of spectators, the weakness and agony of His tortured frame, the cruel execution that involved piercing of hands and feet. It rounds out into a song of missionary triumph, when through a proclaimed Lord of life "all the ends of the earth shall remember, and turn unto Jehovah." None but Jesus can be the central figure of this Psalm, and of Him only did the Spirit indite its words.

The Fortieth Psalm is one concerning the Incarnation, and is so regarded by the inspired exegete who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The Sixty-Ninth Psalm is Christ's cry of distress; His appeal to God amid sufferings; His protestation of loyalty in the words remembered by the disciples at His temple-cleansing, "The zeal of Thy house hath eaten Me up;" likewise His description of suffering on the cross, when there was none to comfort; His final words of imprecation on adversaries; and His call to praise because God will save Zion and build up the walls of Jerusalem. The confession of personal sin in this Psalm, termed Messianic, can best be understood in the light of the Pauline statement, that "He Who knew no sin was made sin for us." That the sympathetic union of Christ with humanity should involve His crying out with personal pain under human sin is illustrated by the trial in a court of justice, where a wicked son, called for sentence and bidden answer the charge of crime, was supported by a pure and honor-loving father, who, with arms of love about his guilty boy, answered with streaming eyes, "We are guilty." Christ's sympathetic identification with humanity is the best

explanation of confession of sin found in Psalms termed subjectively Messianic.

The One Hundred and Ninth Psalm, with its voices of vengeance upon adversaries, and its imprecations following imprecations, may not be viewed by some as a Messianic Psalm; but there is no explanation for its place in the Psalter unless we regard it as the Old Testament counterpart of the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, and see in it the Son of Man standing as earth's vilified Saviour raised to the position of herald-judge, and announcing the doom of persistent wickedness. Much time has been spent to prove the un-Christian character of this Psalm, and effort has been made to explain it through allowance for the unsanctified condition of the Davidic heart. But with the Holy Spirit as the Author of this Psalm, and with Christ as the figure of judgment pronouncing sentence upon evil that will not seek repentance, the Psalm has its justification as to a place in the Psalter, and is not alien to the spirit of Him Who in parable described coming judgment for His rejectors in the words, "But these Mine enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before Me." Judgment is a part of God's work of grace, since grace for the whole world means the judgment of persistent evil.

Of the Psalms termed objectively Messianic there are three: in the judgment of some, five. The Second, the Forty-Fifth, and the One Hundred and Tenth are assuredly so, while some would add to these the Eighth and Seventy-Second, which to others seem but ideally Messianic.

The Second Psalm describes the reign of Jehovah's Anointed. His kingdom is opposed by the heathen who rage and the people who imagine a vain thing. He Who sits in heaven holds human weakness in derision, saying of His purpose, "Yet I have set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." The voice of Messiah is, "I will tell of the decree: Jehovah said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance, And the utter-

most parts of the earth for Thy possession." Then follow prophecy of judgment and triumph and the exhortation that kings be wise; that judges of the earth serve Jehovah with fear, and rejoice with trembling, kissing the Son lest He be angry, and finding blessedness through trust in Him.

The Forty-Fifth Psalm is the song of Christ and His Bride, the Church. By no criticism within the lines of reason can this be made a mere love song to celebrate the nuptials of either David or Solomon. The imagery of majesty passes beyond anything human; while in the sixth verse the King whose nuptials are celebrated is addressed as God. The Psalm is absolutely without interpretation until we get the idea of Christ's love for the Church, and behold Him welcoming this Bride of His heart into an endless fellowship.

The One Hundred and Tenth Psalm is that of the Kingly Priest. It is the picture of Christ upon His mediatorial throne exercising His holy Priesthood as our Advocate with God. He is also the King Who is bidden rule by Jehovah in the midst of His enemies. His millennial glory is pictured in the words, "Thy people offer themselves willingly in the day of Thy power." The glory of the resurrection morning is strikingly described in our metrical version of this Psalm, where believers are likened unto dewdrops reflecting the image of the Sun of Righteousness:

"Thee, in Thy power's triumphant day,  
The willing nations shall obey,  
And, when Thy rising beams they view,  
Shall all, redeemed from error's night,  
Appear as numberless and bright  
As crystal drops of morning dew."

The closing words of the Psalm breathe the triumph of Christ as King and Judge in the final overthrow of all evil power.

The Eighth and Seventy-Second Psalms, while often termed ideally Messianic, are really objectively so. While the Eighth Psalm is a Psalm of ideal human conditions in relation to God,

and descriptive of Man's true control over nature, it is also true that this ideal state is attainable only in Christ, and that He, as our Head and Representative, is referred to in the Psalm. While the Seventy-Second Psalm may contain reference to Solomon's reign, the eyes of the singer soon lift themselves from the foothills of earthly kingship to the mountains that range beyond, where falls the light of Christ's reign. The Psalm therefore rises into an anthem concerning an unending kingdom and a King Whose name is none other than Jesus Christ.

Of the ideally Messianic Psalms there are more than we shall have time to enumerate. The Twenty-Third Psalm is a song of Christ; for when we hear Him saying, "I am the good shepherd," and again, "I and the Father are one," we know that it is Christ the Shepherd that feeds us, Christ Who leads us into green pastures and beside the still waters, Christ Who restores our souls, leads in paths of righteousness, and Who receives us at last into God's house. The Twenty-Third Psalm is beautifully linked with the Twenty-Second in sentiment; for in the one we have the song of the Shepherd in the dark night and desert of sin, seeking for His wandering sheep; while in the other He leads them into the green pastures and through the shadows unto the fold of light.

The Ninetieth and Ninety-First Psalms are also ideally Messianic; for in them Christ is brought near to the soul. When we remember that the Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Jesus of the New, then do we realize that the refuge concerning which Moses sang, and that the abiding place of safety concerning which he spoke, is Jesus Christ. The secret place of the Most High is then to us the heart of Jesus. The shadow of the Almighty is the refuge of His wings. The shield that protects from arrow and pestilence is the care of Christ, and the whole song of Moses a Hymn for the New Testament Church.

The One Hundred and Twenty-First Psalm is one of happy confidence which leads us into the very presence of Christ. When we remember again that the Jehovah of the Old Testament is

the manifested Jesus of the New; that the Eternal Word, Who became flesh, not only was God, but the Creator of all things; then the words, "My help cometh from Jehovah Who made heaven and earth," mean for us, "My help cometh from Jesus Christ." When we hear Jesus saying, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," we find in the promise but the refrain of this song, "Jehovah will keep thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and for evermore."

Keeping ever in thought our Lord's words concerning His oneness with the Father, we shall find new and deeper meanings in the Songs of God. With this view of interpretation we shall find that the key to the meaning of the Psalter "lies in a pierced hand." Psalm xxvii., with its joyous utterance, "Jehovah is my light," brings us into the presence of Him Who said, "I am the light of the world." The One Hundred and Forty-Fifth Psalm, with its extolling of the divine King and praising of His beneficence in opening His hand and supplying the desire of every living thing, leads us into the presence of Him Who in His Galilean ministry had compassion on the multitude, and multiplied bread for them on the green hillside. The songs which describe Jehovah's power over the sea and its billows become also the praise of Him Who with human lips rebuked angry winds, and said to the waves of Gennesaret, "Peace, be still." Singing the One Hundred and Third Psalm, the pearl of the Psalter, or the One Hundred and Sixteenth Psalm, the sublime anthem of gratitude and consecration, Christ becomes the center of each, in that it is of Him we say, "As far as the East is from the West, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us"; and of allegiance to Him that we sing, saying, "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." Entering into the full meaning of the Psalter, we shall find Christ in almost every part, and especially in the Psalms termed Messianic we shall hear Him speaking to us from the cross and from His eternal throne, urging to a world-wide conquest of evangelization that will prepare for the return

of His glory-light to a sin-darkened world. In the thought of another, "When we sing the Psalms with fair weather in the soul, we still hear sweet voices from distant hills, and the soft sighing of an eternal sea that flows towards the spot on which we stand." Psalm after Psalm will be found bearing witness to the Church also, and "as we hear, our hearts may pass onward from the historical Jerusalem, the Church Militant, to the City of the Living God;—and upward to the Church Triumphant, to Jerusalem the Golden, to

"Where beyond these voices there is peace."



## CHRIST IN THE PSALMS

BY THE REV. E. S. MCKITRICK, D. D., PASADENA, CAL.

**M**ARTIN LUTHER used to call the Book of Psalms "a little Bible." Bishop Horne describes it as "an epitome of the Bible." These terms are fully justified in the fact that in the Psalter we find concentrated all the truths which are elsewhere elaborated and enforced in all the divine Word. It thus possesses an internal completeness not found in any other single Book in the inspired volume. Having, evidently, this thought in mind, Thomas Scott, the eminent commentator, says, "There is nothing in true religion—doctrinal, experimental, and practical—but will present itself to our attention whilst we meditate upon the Psalms. The Christian's use of them in the closet, and the minister's in the pulpit, will generally increase with the growing experience of the power of true religion in their own hearts."

One essential reason for this internal completeness of the Psalter is that Christ is the central figure in it, as He is in the entire Word of God. Every Book, indeed, of the Old Testament is intended to lead directly or indirectly to Jesus Christ. But in this respect the Book of Psalms stands preëminent among the entire thirty-nine. Of this the illustrious Edwards said, "The main subjects of these songs were the glorious things of the Gospel, as is evident by the interpretation that is often put upon them, and the use that is made of them, in the New Testament. For, there is no one Book of the Old Testament that is so often quoted in the New as the Book of Psalms. Here Christ is spoken of in multitudes of songs." To the same purport is the testimony of a memorial from the Presbytery of Detroit presented to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church,

New School, in 1856, as quoted in Clokey's "David's Harp in Song and Story." The memorialists say, "It is the thought itself, the grand and sublime, the tender and touching, the thrilling and affecting truth of redemption through Christ, and the coming glories of His Coming and Kingdom, that give to the Book of Psalms its value and power when intelligently employed for purposes of religious praise." By the inspired writers of the New Testament the Psalter is used chiefly as a storehouse from which to bring forth Messianic prophecies to be expounded and applied. Indeed it has been affirmed that it would not be much beyond the fact, if any, to say that there are more references to the Psalms, as speaking of Christ, than to the whole of Moses and the Prophets taken together.

Not only has Christ been found in the Psalms by eminent divines of ancient and modern times, and by the pious in all the intervening ages, and by the inspired writers of the New Testament, but that He is revealed in them is declared unto us by our Lord Himself. In the evening of the day of His resurrection, when He appeared in the midst of His astonished disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem, having first convinced them of the reality of His bodily presence, He said unto them, "These are My words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me." And that they might be able to grasp the revelation of Himself therein contained, "then opened He their mind, that they might understand the Scriptures," and thus enabled them to see in the Psalms, as well as in Moses and the Prophets, the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, which they were thenceforward to proclaim. "And He said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." This wonderful discourse of our Lord evidently made a profound impression upon the minds of the

Apostles, for we find the substance of it embodied in their sermons and Epistles. One cannot read Peter's Epistles, for example, or his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, without feeling that he availed himself of this exposition which he heard from the Master, and especially that portion of it which pertained to the Psalter. The same is true of all the discourses and writings of those who heard Christ in the upper room, and of those of the Apostle Paul as well, who tells us that he delivers unto us that which he also received, "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." The same characteristic appears in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which, in the very first chapter, in order to show from the Scriptures the transcendent dignity of Christ's person and office, quotes at least six of seven passages given from the Book of Psalms. That there is Messianic prophecy in the Psalter, therefore, is positively asserted both by Christ Himself and His inspired Apostles, and must have credit, upon their testimony, from all who are not prepared openly to reject the authority of their teaching.

In referring briefly to a few of the Messianic Psalms it will be convenient to group them in two divisions—first, those which are directly Messianic, and, second, those which are typically Messianic.

I. The directly Messianic Psalms. There are some Psalms which are applicable to none but Jesus Christ, and which relate to Him directly and exclusively. Of these we may take the Twenty-Second as an example. The title refers it to David as the writer, but nothing in David's life, so far as recorded, corresponds to the experiences which the sufferer in this Psalm here records as his own. David's hands and feet were never pierced, nor did his enemies part his garments among them, or cast lots upon his vesture. Moreover, this sufferer, rising above his present pain and desertion, rejoices that his agony will result in bringing the nations of the earth to God, and no such result ever flowed from the persecutions of David. The only adequate explanation is that which hears in this Psalm the voice of the

Man of Sorrows, and sees in the picture here so vividly portrayed the sufferings of the Messiah and the glory that was to follow. The scene described is just such a scene as was witnessed on Calvary. The sufferer is surrounded by scornful enemies, who heap reproaches upon him in his agony. They pour out derision upon him in terms almost exactly identical with those which, the Gospel writers tell us, were used by the heartless crowds that gathered about the cross of the Nazarene. And this crucifixion scene is described, not merely in vague and general terms, but in unmistakable detail. The burning thirst making the tongue cleave to the jaws, the strength dried up, the bones protruding so that they might be counted, the staring crowd, the piercing of hands and feet, the parting of garments by lot among the executioners—surely all these, written more than a thousand years before the event, present to us the very cross of Christ as vividly and as accurately as do the descriptions of the same scene written in the Gospels. It is not strange, therefore, that Jesus, when suffering under the burden of the sins of the world, cried out in the very opening words of this Psalm, and thus claimed it forever as pertaining to Himself. And as corroborating this view, though this Psalm is a cry from the depths of distress by one who is not only bitterly persecuted by man, but who seems to himself to be, for the time, forsaken of God, yet there is no confession of sin, no compunction, or remorse. If David, or any other saint of old, had written it concerning his own sorrows, surely there would have been in it somewhere some word of contrition. Such sad lament, without note of confession, can be appropriate only upon the lips of the Man of Sorrows. The Psalm is in two parts, one pointing to the sufferings, and the other to the glory that should follow as consequences of the sufferer's woes and deliverance, and these results are such that it is impossible to suppose that any mere man's experiences could ever be so important and far-reaching. The whole congregation of Israel is to learn more of God's name through him. Yea, more—his anticipations embrace

all lands and all ages, and assume that through his sufferings "all ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto Jehovah." This language can be appropriate to but one mouth. Such world-wide and lasting consequences can follow but one life. The sorrows of the first part of the Psalm can only be a description of our Lord's passion, and the glories of the second can only be a prophetic vision of His universal Kingdom, extending to the remotest generations of mankind. To understand this Psalm we must keep in mind that "He hath made Him to be sin for us," "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." To reach the golden treasures of this Psalm, as of many others, we must follow the leading of the Crucified One.

Another example of the directly Messianic Psalms is the One Hundred and Tenth. That it is a prophecy is intimated in its opening words, "Jehovah saith,"—a formula almost identical with the "Thus saith Jehovah" used by the prophets to introduce the messages of God which they were commissioned to deliver. Two facts are announced concerning the promised Messiah, which, at that time, were but dimly understood—His exaltation to God's right hand, and His perpetual and royal priesthood. That this Psalm was understood by the Jews in our Saviour's time to refer to the Messiah, even though it may have been but imperfectly apprehended, is evident from the fact that when He cited it to prove that David's Son was also David's Lord, the Pharisees were not able to reply. If its Messianic reference had not at that time been generally conceded, if there had been difference of opinion in regard to it, no doubt the wily Pharisees would have been very ready to avail themselves of that fact in order to escape the dilemma into which the Master's question led them. Besides, it is only when read as a prophecy of the Messiah that the understanding of this Psalm becomes possible. David, who was unquestionably the writer, upon the testimony of both our Lord and the inspired writers of the New Testament, could hardly have written of himself

as "My Lord," and nowhere in all the Scriptures is an earthly king invited to sit at the right hand of Jehovah as His fellow. Neither do we find in the history of David, or of any other king, that the people are represented as following him in holy vestments as an army of priests as they follow the One here spoken of, and of Whom in the Revelation we read that His "armies followed Him, clothed in fine linen, clean and white." And whether David ever offered sacrifices with his own hand or not, he assuredly was never priest in such sense as the one here celebrated—"Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." A priest without predecessor or successor, one whose priesthood is forever, and to whom his office has been confirmed by the solemn oath of Jehovah Himself—this can be none other than the Great High Priest Who has passed into the heavens. This is the Psalm from which the New Testament writers preach Christ more than from any other single passage in all the sacred Scriptures, and the wonderful conqueror, whose portrait is here painted in such glowing colors, so far transcending any possible original among the sons of men, this priest enthroned at God's right hand, who is both Son and Lord of David, can be none other than the Son of God. These are but two instances of directly and exclusively Messianic Psalms. Of the same character are the Second, the Forty-Fifth, and others.

II. In the second group which we are to consider are those which are typically Messianic. We find in the Psalter numerous passages, which, though written with primary reference to David and his kingdom, were intended to turn our minds forward to the person and kingdom of that Son and Lord of Whom David was a conspicuous type. Hence in his writings, under the Spirit's influence, he frequently rises above his personal experiences, and speaks in terms which, though applicable in a limited sense to himself, are only applicable in their full meaning to our Lord. Such, for example, are the words in the Sixty-First Psalm—"Thou wilt prolong the king's life; His years shall be

as many generations; He shall abide before God forever"; and similar words in the Twenty-First Psalm—"He asked life of Thee, Thou gavest it Him, even length of days forever and ever." These statements are made concerning a king, and have a certain application to David, but can only be applied in their full meaning to the King Who is enthroned in the skies.

In the One Hundred and Eighteenth Psalm, which is probably a song of the second temple, a rejected stone which was ultimately given the place of honor as the corner-stone represents primarily the despised remnant of God's people honored in the great plan for saving the world, but at the same time typifies the advancement of the One Who was "despised and rejected of men" to the supreme place in the wonderful plan of God—"The stone which the builders rejected is become the headstone of the corner." The Apostle Peter, in his address before the Sanhedrin, fixes the ultimate meaning of these words when he says with reference to Christ, "He is the Stone which was set at nought of you builders, which was made the head of the corner."

Another typically Messianic Psalm is the Seventy-Second. In it the reign of Solomon is evidently in mind, but only as a type of the wider reign of the king's greater Son, and hence as the Psalm progresses we find our thoughts carried far beyond the young king to another Son of David, Whose dominion is to extend to "the ends of the earth." "His name shall endure forever; His name shall be continued as long as the sun. And men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed." The type gradually recedes as the song advances until our thoughts come to be concentrated entirely upon the great Antitype, the glorious Prince of Peace. To this typically Messianic group belong the Eighth Psalm, the Sixteenth, Eighteenth, Fortieth, the Fifty-Fifth, Sixty-Ninth, Eighty-Ninth, One Hundred and Ninth, and others.

But how are we to understand those confessions of sin found in Psalms which are distinctly applied to Christ by inspired

writers in the New Testament? This difficulty practically disappears when we remember that "Him Who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf," and that "Jehovah hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Only upon this ground can we understand the Father's desertion of His suffering Son, and the unutterable anguish of the innocent victim. And if He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, if He carried and expiated the awful load of our guilt, why should not the expression of this fact be found in those Psalms which voice His agony and His victory? Moreover, Christ and His people are one body, He being the head and they the members. He so identifies Himself with His people that what is done to them He recognizes as done to Himself. It is possible, therefore, to affirm concerning Christ mystical many things which would be true of the body, but not of the head, and *vice versa*, just as we frequently make affirmations concerning our fellow-men which may be true of the body or of the spirit, but not of both. To say that a man is six feet in height does not refer to his spirit, and to say that he is kind does not refer to his body, and yet both statements may be strictly true concerning him. Christ and His Church constitute one body in a union more intimate than that of the human body and spirit, and why should not the voice of Christ mystical speak in the Psalter, so that in some passages we hear the voice of the Head, and in others the voice of the members, both being the voice of the one Christ? And thus confessions of sin and claims of innocence may both be true and appropriate in the mouth of the one mystical Person.

The offices of Christ as mediator are as truly set forth in the Psalms as in the New Testament. As a prophet He says in the Twenty-Second, "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren"; and in the Fortieth, "I have proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness in the great assembly. . . . I have declared Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation." As to His priestly office, the Father says to Him in the One Hundred and Tenth Psalm, "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." In



the Fortieth, we find Him entering upon the work of this office: "Lo, I am come; In the roll of the book it is written of Me: I delight to do Thy will, O my God." His kingly office is declared in the Second Psalm—"Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion," and in the Forty-Fifth, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever. A scepter of equity is the scepter of Thy Kingdom." These are but a few of the references to the three-fold work of our Redeemer.

But the person of Christ is fully presented in the Psalter, as well as His work. Indeed, it has been asserted, and not without reason, that out of the Psalms one could compile a biography of Jesus. His eternal Sonship is declared in the Second Psalm: "Jehovah said unto Me, Thou art My Son; This day have I begotten Thee." His incarnation is foretold in the Fortieth Psalm as applied in the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body didst Thou prepare for Me," and in the Twenty-Second: "Thou art My God since My mother bore Me." It is at least suggestive of the supernatural birth of Jesus that, while He speaks repeatedly and tenderly in the Twenty-Second Psalm of a human mother, there is not a word concerning a human father. His favorite name, "Son of Man," is taken from the Eighth Psalm, as well as from the Book of Daniel. As we have seen, He is presented in the Second Psalm as the "Son of God," and in the same Psalm He is called the "Anointed," that is, "the Christ," while the Twenty-Third is evidently the origin of "the Good Shepherd." All the usual names applied to Him in the New Testament are given in the Psalms, except the name Jesus, and it is given frequently in substance, if not in form. His trust in God and obedience to Him are beautifully set forth in the whole of the Eighteenth Psalm; His moral beauty in the Forty-Fifth—"Thou art fairer than the children of men"; likewise His anointing of the Holy Spirit—"Grace is poured into Thy lips." His life of self-sacrifice is shown from the Sixty-Ninth Psalm by the Apostle Paul,

“For Christ also pleased not Himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me.” In this Psalm we have His passionate devotion to God’s service—“The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up.” His taking sinners into union with Himself—a truth which underlies the whole Psalter—is stated in the Twenty-Second, as interpreted in the Epistle to the Hebrews—“I will declare Thy name unto My brethren.” His rejection is mentioned in the Sixty-Ninth—“I am become a stranger unto My brethren, and an alien unto My mother’s children”; “They that hate Me without cause are more than the hairs of My head.” His triumphal entry into Jerusalem was foreshadowed in the Eighth Psalm—“Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast Thou established strength,” and in the One Hundred and Eighteenth—“Blessed be He that cometh in the name of Jehovah.” The conspiracy of His foes against Him is in the Thirty-First—“They took counsel together against Me, they devised to take away My life.” His betrayal by one of the Twelve is foretold in the Forty-First, as He Himself pointed out—“He that eateth My bread lifted up his heel against Me.” The manner of His death is foretold in the Twenty-Second—“They pierced My hands and My feet.” Even the disposition of His clothes is mentioned—“They part My garments among them, and upon My vesture do they cast lots.” His cry of desolation was in the opening words of this Psalm, in which they are followed by a most accurate and pathetic description of the whole crucifixion scene. The Sixty-Ninth adds another line to the dark picture—“They gave Me also gall for My food; and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink.” That His bones should not be broken, as were those hanging on either side of Him, is predicted in the Thirty-Fourth, as applied in John’s Gospel—“A bone of Him shall not be broken.” His dying words were from the Thirty-First—“Into Thy hands I commend My spirit.” His resurrection is foretold in the Sixteenth, as cited in Peter’s sermon at Pentecost—“Thou wilt not leave My soul unto Hades, neither wilt Thou give Thy Holy One to see corruption.” His

ascension, also, is mentioned—"Thou hast ascended on high"; "God is gone up with a shout, Jehovah with the sound of a trumpet." His kingdom and its ultimate triumph are described in the familiar Seventy-Second Psalm, and His coming in judgment in the Fiftieth and the Ninety-Eighth—"Our God cometh, and doth not keep silence"; "He calleth to the heavens above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people"; "For He cometh to judge the earth; He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity."

In these revelations of Jesus in the Psalter there is this advantage over all others—He speaks mainly in the first person, and tells us His own feelings while working and suffering and dying for our redemption. And these revelations are chiefly in the past tense, as if to indicate that they were intended more for the gospel age than for that in which they were written.

Within the narrow limits of the time allotted it has been possible to present but the merest outline of the Christology of the Psalms. Many fertile and inviting fields have been reluctantly passed by. But even with such a limited view of the subject, does it not seem remarkable that the use of these matchless songs in the services of praise should ever have been objected to as having no Christ in them by any who claim acquaintance with them, or with the application of them made by the inspired writers of the New Testament? Stanley declares of the Psalter, that "no one book has played so large a part in the history of so many human souls." And is not this chiefly because it is so full of Him Who is the light and life of men?

Hearing the voice of Christ so distinctly speaking in these wonderful Songs of Zion, and seeing His loving face so clearly mirrored in them, shall we not all respond heartily to the earnest words of Bishop Alexander: "Love and study the Psalter. You will discover that it will indeed

‘Requite  
Studios regard with opportune delight.’

In it you will find Him Whom it is best to know—Jesus, your

Lord and your God. And as time goes on—when you bow down in penitence; when you seek for pardon; when your head is bent in sorrow; when you lie on a bed of sickness; when your lips turn white and quiver as you kneel before your dead; as the solemn hour comes, when your spirit must pass into God's presence—it has treasures which will never fail you."

## THE DEVOTIONAL VALUE OF THE PSALTER

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THE considerations to which chief place will be allowed in this estimate of the worthiness of the Psalter as a manual of devotion are these, viz.: The conception of the character of God that it presents, and the apprehension of the need and longing of the soul of man that it exhibits. Leaving out of view the matter of divine authorization, which of course should settle at once all questions touching the fitness of the offering or the duty of the offerer,—leaving this out of view, since in the present discussion we are to deal with internal excellences rather than with external stamps and seals, with the subject matter of the song rather than its source, or the warrant that establishes its right,—the claim is nevertheless confidently advanced that the Book of Psalms, fully meeting all requirements that may justly be made of a manual of devotion, as no other collection of songs has done, must be allowed to take rank as high above all rivals as the thoughts of God which breathe in its measures are above the thoughts of man. It is first, and there is no second.

But to the touchstone. Let the claims of our Psalter be fairly subjected to the proposed criteria, and let such degree of merit be acknowledged as the test shall determine. Note first the conception of God that the Psalter entertains. It matters much what presentation of the character of God may be given in our devotional songs. If there is found in any manual of praise that we employ an unworthy, an incomplete, conception of Him Who is all glorious, infinite in all His perfections, then by so much as it is defective in this respect may there be reason for such judgment of our service as that which our Lord passed

upon the devotions of the people of Samaria: "Ye worship ye know not what."<sup>1</sup> Except one have that special guidance and control exercised by the Holy Spirit which we call Inspiration,—which Peter describes as being "borne along by the Holy Spirit,"<sup>2</sup> it cannot be that even the most devout soul and most thoroughly instructed mind will enable one to avoid error in some form and degree in his conception of the divine character. "The things of God none knoweth save the Spirit of God."<sup>3</sup> The only possible guaranty of preservation from misrepresentation, in greater measure or in less, is that which the writers of the Scriptures received that they might speak the things that were given them of God, "not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words."<sup>4</sup>

But while we may well call in question both the fitness and the right of any man to speak for God, either as prophet or as psalmist, without divine commission suitable to his office, we need have no solicitude regarding the teaching of songs whose writers could say, as the leader and prince of them all did say, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue."<sup>5</sup> The psalmody that is thus God-breathed is in its every portion "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."<sup>6</sup> In it we have the true "songs of the Lord." In it there is no misrepresentation; in it there is no omission. There is not one of all the glorious round of perfections that belong to the infinite Jehovah which is not "enthroned upon the praises of Israel"<sup>7</sup> as they are voiced in the Book of Psalms.

Not to attempt to set forth in its fullness the revelation of God which the Psalter has made, let it be marked that there are two features of His character, two perfections of His nature, gloriously magnified in the songs of inspiration that have very insufficient presentation in the productions of uninspired men; and

<sup>1</sup> John iv. 22. <sup>2</sup> 2 Peter i. 21. <sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 11.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 13. <sup>5</sup> 2 Sam. xxiii. 2. <sup>6</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 16. <sup>7</sup> Ps. xxii. 3.

this is due not to unwillingness of spirit on the part of such writers, but rather to weakness of the flesh. The attributes thus signalized are God's holiness and His justice. Attentive Bible readers cannot have failed to note how profoundly the most highly honored and devoted men of God were moved when they were brought consciously into the immediate presence of the holiness of God. Recall the experience of Job, who humbled himself in the dust under the sway of such a vision.<sup>8</sup> Remember Moses in the holy mount, who said at sight of the heavenly glory, "I exceedingly fear and quake."<sup>9</sup> Think of Joshua prostrate on his face in the presence of the Captain of the Lord's host,<sup>10</sup> of Gideon's dread when the knowledge had come to him that he had seen the face of the Angel of the Lord,<sup>11</sup> of Manoah's alarm when he realized that he had looked on God,<sup>12</sup> of Elijah's awe in the cave of Horeb when the still small voice was heard,<sup>13</sup> of Isaiah's terror in the temple filled with glory,<sup>14</sup> of Daniel's fear and fainting at sight of the lightning-like appearance of the Man at the river Hiddekel,<sup>15</sup> of the beloved disciple's deathlike swoon when the Lord on Whose human breast he had so often leaned appeared to him in the body of His glory,<sup>16</sup> of Paul's weakness and utter insufficiency to describe the wonders of Paradise, whither he had been taken in his rapture, and where he had heard "unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter."<sup>17</sup> So were these great among great of God's people affected by the presence of Him Whom Moses addresses as "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises."<sup>18</sup>

The songs of inspiration purposely reveal our God in such light as that His holiness shall move to deepest reverence, to profoundest awe. Not once nor twice only, but many times does the mighty refrain ring out, in varying yet similar tones, "Let all the earth fear Jehovah. Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him."<sup>19</sup> Even in that wonderful covenant

<sup>8</sup> Job xlii. 5.      <sup>9</sup> Heb. xii. 21.      <sup>10</sup> Josh. v. 14.      <sup>11</sup> Judges vi. 22.  
<sup>12</sup> Judges xiii. 22.      <sup>13</sup> 1 Kings xix. 13.      <sup>14</sup> Isa. vi. 5.      <sup>15</sup> Dan. x. 8.  
<sup>16</sup> Rev. i. 17.      <sup>17</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 4.      <sup>18</sup> Exod. xv. 11.      <sup>19</sup> Ps. xxxiii. 8.

Psalm, the Eighty-Ninth, He is praised as a God "very terrible in the council of the holy ones, and to be feared above all those that are round about Him." While in the Ninety-Ninth Psalm, the "Trisagion" of the Psalter, once and again and again the chorus sounds forth, as the "voice of many waters and mighty thundering," "Exalt ye Jehovah, our God, and worship at His holy hill, for Jehovah, our God, is holy." What wonder is it that the Psalmist himself should say, under the constraint of such experience, "My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee, and I am afraid of Thy judgments." "My heart standeth in awe of Thy words."<sup>20</sup> Does any suggest that these expressions savor of the fear that hath torment and not of the love that casteth out fear?<sup>21</sup> Have a care in passing such judgment. Until the well-beloved Daniels and Johns cease to faint and swoon away in the presence of their Lord, Whose appearing they so greatly loved, and the seraphim cease to cover their feet and faces as they praise the thrice Holy One—The Holy Three in One,—it will be fitting that worshipers cultivate the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge, the consciousness, of the holy which is understanding.<sup>22</sup> Let the songs of the sanctuary teach us to seek "grace whereby we may offer service well pleasing to God with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."<sup>23</sup>

In addressing themselves to other divine perfections the inspired Psalmists ascend to heights and descend to depths to which no human mind or soul would dare either to lead uncalled or to follow another unsent of heaven. They venture to sing praise to God even for His manifestations of power and justice in His dealing with sin, which but for the unquestionable warrant and unmistakable signal they give us to sing would make thoughtful men "dumb with silence." Think of the songs that announce the fearful judgment of wrath upon finally impenitent sinners. No uninspired man has ever written songs to praise the Lord for such judgments. The "Dies Iræ"<sup>24</sup> is not an excep-

<sup>20</sup> Ps. cxix. 120, 161.   <sup>21</sup> I John iv. 18.   <sup>22</sup> Prov. ix. 10.

<sup>23</sup> Heb. xii. 28, 29.

<sup>24</sup> By Thomas of Celano, c. 1250.



tion. This is the part of wisdom ; but the reason for such omission is, one dare not write them. No man without the divine guidance and command may take it upon himself to prepare such songs. In fixing such limitation all are agreed, but such agreement involves the acknowledgment that uninspired men are incapable of producing a complete manual of praise. They dare not try to make it complete. But God is to be praised for all that He is and all that He does. A worthy psalmody will magnify His character in its every attribute and accomplishment. This the Psalter recognizes. This the songs of the saints in glory acknowledge as essential. Listen to the hymn of the victors who stand on the crystal sea that glows with fire, "Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou only art holy ; for all nations shall come and worship before Thee ; for Thy judgments are made manifest."<sup>25</sup> Listen to the angel of the waters when the first three vials of wrath have been poured out upon the earth : "Thou art righteous, O Lord, Who art and wast and shalt be, because Thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints, and Thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy." And out from the altar, beneath which the souls of the martyrs are waiting, there comes this response to the angel's words : "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments."<sup>26</sup> Hear also the voice of the great multitude in heaven praising God for the destruction of that monster agency for evil called "Babylon." "Hallelujah ! Salvation and honor and glory and power belong unto our God, for true and righteous are His judgments."<sup>27</sup> Can you find strains in the "Imprecatory Psalms" more awful than these? The Book of Psalms, whether it sings of mercy or of judgment, is in full harmony with the psalmody of heaven. This is true of no other book of praises, for no uninspired writer dare sing of judgment as does the "Sweet Psalmist of Israel." But neither the hymnody of earth nor that of heaven is complete without the judgment songs.

<sup>25</sup> Rev. xv. 4.

<sup>26</sup> Rev. xvi. 5, 6, 7.

<sup>27</sup> Rev. xix. 1, 2.

Yet with all that is awe-inspiring in the character of God, as the Psalter sets it forth, it is God manifest in the flesh, God in Jesus Christ, Who is ever kept in view. The Psalms sing of "mercy" and of "judgment." The Jews were taught to regard Messiah as king and chief in the Book of Psalms. The Fathers of the Early Christian Church entertained a like conception of Christ's inhabiting the praises of Israel. Their writings abound in examples of such interpretation. Nor was this the suggestion of an exuberant imagination. They had the witness and the example of inspired teachers. They simply followed the lead of such as Paul, when he charged believers to let the "word of Christ dwell in them richly, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."<sup>28</sup> Who has not marked in the New Testament Scriptures the freedom and the readiness with which both speakers and writers refer the language or the allusions of the Psalms to Jesus Christ? Following their inspired and hence infallible interpretation of the words of these Spirit-given songs, noting only quotations which they have made and references which they have indicated, we may see or hear Messiah in at least thirty Psalms.<sup>29</sup> In this number the Twenty-Third Psalm is not reckoned, for it

<sup>28</sup> Col. iii. 16.

<sup>29</sup> Ps. ii. 1 = Acts iv. 25, 26; Ps. viii. 4-6 = Heb. ii. 6-8; Ps. xvi. 8-11 = Acts ii. 25-28; Ps. xviii. 2 = Heb. ii. 13; Ps. xxi. 6 = Acts ii. 28; Ps. xxii. 1 = Matt. xxvii. 46; Ps. xxxi. 5 = Luke xxiii. 46; Ps. xxxiv. 20 = John xix. 36; Ps. xl. 6-8 = Heb. x. 5-7; Ps. xli. 9 = John xiii. 18; Ps. xlv. 6, 7 = Heb. i. 8, 9; Ps. lxviii. 18 = Eph. iv. 8; Ps. lxix. 9 = John ii. 17; Ps. lxxii. 5-8 = Luke i. 33; Ps. lxxviii. 2 = Matt. xiii. 35; Ps. lxxxix. 27 = Col. i. 15, 18; Ps. xci. 11 = Matt. iv. 6; Ps. xcvi. 7, 8 = Heb. iii. 7-9; Ps. xcvi. 13 = Acts xvii. 31; Ps. xcvi. 7 = Heb. i. 6; Ps. xcvi. 9 = Acts xvii. 31; Ps. cii. 25-27 = Heb. i. 10-12; Ps. cv. 41 = 1 Cor. x. 4; Ps. cvi. 14 = 1 Cor. x. 9; Ps. cix. 8 = Acts i. 20; Ps. cx. 4 = Heb. v. 6; Ps. cxvii. 1 = Rom. xv. 11; Ps. cxviii. 22 = Matt. xxi. 42; Ps. cxxxii. 11 = Acts ii. 30; Ps. cxlvi. 8 = Luke vii. 21; Ps. cxlvii. 2, 3 = Luke iv. 18.

*Note*—Of some of these Psalms different portions are cited by different writers of the New Testament, and in a few instances the same quotation is made to serve in various connections. Had every citation been set down in the collection of passages above given, the list would have been considerably extended.

is not quoted, nor is it referred to, by the New Testament writers as of Messianic character; yet who questions that Christ is the shepherd of whom it sings? If one should make fairly allowable use of the key that Jesus Himself and Matthew and John and Peter and Paul employed in their interpretation of the Psalms, he might confidently undertake to find the Christ not only in every song, but in almost every stanza, of the Psalter. In the body of His flesh men failed to recognize the Son of God; so here as He is clothed in the garments of praise the human heart in many instances is too dull and slow to apprehend His presence; but He is here for all that. On account of failure to recognize this noteworthy characteristic of the Psalter Isaac Watts, in 1719, published a volume entitled "The Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament." As if the songs of the Spirit needed to be converted from law to grace! The commendation of Dr. Watts' work, which Theodor Christlieb writes and Philip Schaff so willingly quotes, that his psalms have an "evangelical character," that he "substitutes everywhere gospel for law," and that where "the Psalmist speaks of sacrifice of bullocks and oxen he introduces the sacrifice of Christ,"<sup>30</sup> has little weight when it is remembered that only twenty-one Psalms sing of service or of sacrifice in legal phrase in any sense or form or significance; that only thirty verses out of twenty-four hundred and forty-two in the Book of Psalms suggest in any wise the idea of sacrifice; that four of these thirty verses refer to idolatrous sacrifices,<sup>31</sup> five others speak of legal sacrifice disparagingly as in itself of little or of no avail in God's sight,<sup>32</sup> and fifteen more use the language of the temple service exactly as Peter and Paul employ it in calling to Christian service;<sup>33</sup> and that of the six verses remaining, five commend the bringing of animal sacrifice in general terms that are in keeping

<sup>30</sup> Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia, "Isaac Watts."

<sup>31</sup> Ps. xvi. 4; cvi. 28, 37, 38.

<sup>32</sup> Ps. xl. 6; l. 8, 13; li. 16; lxix. 31.

<sup>33</sup> Ps. iv. 5; xxvi. 6; xxvii. 6; xliii. 4; l. 14, 23; li. 17; liv. 6; lvi. 12; xcvi. 8; cvii. 22; cx. 3; cxvi. 17; cxix. 108; cxli. 2.

with the worship of the temple, which nevertheless admit and even suggest a thoroughly evangelical construction,<sup>34</sup> while the one solitary strain that is left,—“Bind the sacrifice with cords even unto the horns of the altar,”<sup>35</sup> is found in the verse next succeeding that which became the children’s choral in the temple courts as they welcomed Jesus Christ as David’s Son and Zion’s King, “Hosanna! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.” In such a setting what is the need that Dr. Watts or any other should write into this stanza sentiment of “evangelical character.”

But granting that the conception of God which the Psalter presents is worthy, all-sufficient, and true in every feature, does it so voice the needs and the longings of the human soul as to furnish a complete manual of devotion? Past question the claim of sufficiency in this respect is a vast one, and can be justified only by the presentation of abundant proof. But great as the demand for testimony may be, the supply is greater. Indeed, the advocate of this claim will surely find himself burdened with the riches that fall to his hand ready for use in answer to the challenge that may proceed from any quarter. From an old encyclopedia this gem of testimony is taken. The witness is unknown, or at least he is not named, but sure it is he writes as one who had sung these Psalms with grace in his heart to the Lord, and from their teaching and admonition had received the knowledge of God’s covenant. Hear his word. “The moral of life, the mystery of redeeming grace, the display of almighty power and almighty love, the spiritual history of the world, the passage of Jehovah through the wonders of His creation—all that can alarm the wicked, revive the penitent, console the afflicted, and confirm the faithful, is to be found in the Book of Psalms.

But in this same Book these subjects are often to be sought for so much below the shining surface of its poetical beauties, so deep in the recesses of spiritual wisdom, and so near the border

<sup>34</sup> Ps. xx. 3; l. 5; li. 19; lxvi. 13, 15.

<sup>35</sup> Ps. cxviii. 27.

of the invisible world, that minds of the greatest grasp and longest reach are never more usefully employed for mankind than when engaged in the interpretation of this part of the Holy Scriptures. Lessons of wisdom that are as salutary as they are intelligible lie open in the Psalms to the ordinary reader. The character of God, the rewards of piety, the vanity of human cares, and the deceitfulness of human counsels are enforced and explained by examples, by images, and by descriptions so magnificent, yet so familiar, so elevating, yet so natural, so suitable to common feeling, yet so commensurate with our highest faculties, that all must acknowledge their excellence, and few can wholly resist their influence. But to minds inquisitively pious and ardent in the pursuit of heavenly knowledge these seraphic songs present a pathway of discovery continually opening before them, refulgent with the footsteps of the Messiah and resounding with the promises of the gospel.”<sup>36</sup>

To like effect is the testimony of Bishop Horne, a godly English divine of the eighteenth century. Says he, “The Psalms are an epitome of the Bible adapted to the purposes of devotion. . . . This little volume, like the Paradise of Eden, affords us in perfection, though in miniature, every thing that groweth elsewhere,—‘every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food,’—and above all, what was there lost but is here restored, ‘the tree of life in the midst of the garden.’”<sup>37</sup> Very touching are the words with which he closes the preface to his Commentary on the Psalms: “Every Psalm improved upon my acquaintance with it, and no one gave me uneasiness except the last, for then I grieved that my work was done. Happier hours than those that have been spent in these meditations on the songs of Zion I never expect to see in this world. Very pleasantly did they pass, and moved smoothly and swiftly along, for when thus engaged I counted no time. They are gone, but they have left

<sup>36</sup> Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, compiled by The Rev. J. Newton Brown.

<sup>37</sup> Preface to Commentary on the Psalms, published in 1776.

a relish and a fragrance upon the mind, and the remembrance of them is sweet."

How like these are Mr. Spurgeon's words in the preface to the last volume of his noble work on the Psalms, as he recalls the varied experiences of twenty years of communing and worshipping with the sweet Psalmist of Israel. "A tinge of sadness is on my heart as I quit the 'Treasury of David,' never to find on this earth a richer store-house, though the whole palace of revelation is open unto me. Blessed have been the days spent in meditating, mourning, hoping, believing, and exulting with David. Can I hope to spend hours more joyous on this side of the Golden Gate? Perhaps not, for the seasons have been very choice in which the harp of the great poet of the sanctuary has charmed my ear." With most excellent advice to others he closes his testimony to the exhaustless richness and perennial freshness of these truly spiritual songs. Says he, "In these busy days it would be greatly to the spiritual profit of Christian men if they were more familiar with the Book of Psalms, in which they would find a complete armor for life's battles and a perfect supply for life's needs. Here we have both delight and usefulness, consolation and instruction. For every condition there is a Psalm suitable and elevating. The Book supplies the babe in Christ with penitent cries and the perfected saint with triumphant songs. Its breadth of experience stretches from the jaws of Hell to the gates of Heaven. He who is acquainted with the marches of the Psalm country knows that the land flows with milk and honey, and he delights to travel therein."

Listen to a single extract more from the words of Professor Tholuck, one of the profoundest and most evangelical among the scholars of Germany in late generations. Says he, "Whatever truths or praises can be spoken or sung of the wisdom, eternity, omnipotence, holiness, justice, and mercy of God are expressed in the Psalms. Here is piety which, on the one hand, losing itself in the praises of God's grace, preserves on the other an open eye for His glory in nature, before whose view the declara-

tion of the Book of the Law and that of the Book of Creation entirely commingle. Here we have the unceasing praise of God in gloomy as well as in joyous days, for mercies temporal and spiritual, in every variety and tone of expression, leading up to the last Psalms, the many-tongued echoes of the entire Book, with the oft-repeated, universal call, 'Praise ye the Lord.'"

Volumes might be filled with such testimony drawn from almost every conceivable source, for no psalmody has ministered to the hearts that have hymned it as has this of the Holy Spirit. No other songs have inspired men to such mighty deeds of heroism. They have made the singers mighty under the influence of the Spirit that breathes in them. In the darkest times that have ever come upon the Church these Psalms have been the "songs in the night" that have hushed the cry of fear and stilled the moan of despair. The Waldenses, "who kept God's truth so pure of old," sang them when the corrupted Greek and Romish Churches had cast them off. The Huguenots of France sang them and defied Richelieu and Louis XIV. In the Netherlands, whose soil has been drenched with the blood of patriots almost as freely as with the waters of the sea whence it was reclaimed, these Psalms were sung during that long and dreadful "Eighty Years' War" by Protestant soldiers in the camp and on the battlefield, by martyrs in the dungeon, on the rack, and at the stake, and the virile Christianity they teach strengthened these simple-hearted burghers and peasants to humble the armies of the mightiest Romish kingdom that ever cursed the world, gave them courage and devotion to the cause of civil and religious liberty such as constrained them to cut their dikes and give back their lands to the arms of the sea rather than yield them to the hands of Spain. The moors and heaths and mountain glens of Scotland have rung with these sacred songs and now cover the dust of—God only knows how many—thousands who sang them in the awful "killing times."

These martyrs for Christ, the uncounted host of witnesses faithful unto death to the truth as it is in Jesus in all ages, have

proved that these inspired hymns furnish an all-sufficient manual of praise, suitable and seasonable in sunshine and in shadow, in calm and in storm, in the morning of hope, the noontide of victory, the sunset of defeat, and the midnight of captivity and death. Jesus Christ Himself drew upon this exhaustless treasury. The heart that loved and ached and trusted as none before or since found all that is to be desired in the Book of Psalms. In that upper room as He looked out through the shadows to the joy that was set before Him He hymned His confidence in Zion's songs.<sup>38</sup> On the cross, suffering in body and in soul as no mere man ever suffered or can suffer, these songs of the Spirit furnished Him worthy expression of His anguish and His faith.<sup>39</sup> He chose the words of one of them as a fit dismissal of the spirit which had animated His human body, and the strains of four others served as a suitable introduction to the world for the Holy Spirit of promise Who should vivify His mystical body, the Church.<sup>40</sup> If these songs possess a fullness which satisfied the Christ of God, what need have we to supplement them, to supplant them, with the songs of men?

In this connection mention should be made of another notable and peculiar characteristic of the praise songs of the Psalter. It appears in the fact that as they bear heavenward the desires and the longings of the worshipers, and their ascriptions of "blessing and honor and glory and power unto Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb,"<sup>41</sup> they also give expression to the grace and mercy and peace that descend in benediction from Him Who is worshiped. There are no other songs in which God Himself has such part as that which He fills in the songs of the Holy Spirit. He who sings them with grace in the heart not only sings of God and to God; he also sings with God. Indeed, the chief joy that comes to him who worships in spirit and in truth grows out of this sense of "fellowship with the Father and

<sup>38</sup> Second portion of the Hallel. Pss. cxv.-cxviii.—Edersheim.

<sup>39</sup> Ps. xxii. 1; xxxi. 5.

<sup>40</sup> Ps. xvi. 8-11; xxi. 6; cxxxii. 11; cx. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Rev. v. 13.



with His Son, Jesus Christ.”<sup>42</sup> Such communion is a veritable experience of heaven upon earth, in which Zephaniah’s words have blessed realization, “Jehovah, thy God, is in the midst of thee, a Mighty One Who will save. He will rejoice over thee with joy. He will rest in His love. He will joy over thee with singing.”<sup>43</sup>

This crowning peculiarity of the songs of inspiration above all other devotional songs is clearly manifest in those Psalms in which God is represented as speaking in person, and is not the less really apparent in others in which the psalmist assumes also the rôle of the prophet and so speaks for God. This fellowship in song becomes all the more significant to us as we recall the Holy Spirit’s interpretation of these heavenly strains as the “word of Christ.”<sup>44</sup> In Jesus’ name we sing, as in Jesus’ name we pray, when in the songs of Zion we lift our hearts to God in praise. He Who has brought us up out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set our feet upon the rock, has also put a new song in our mouth, even the “Song of the Lamb.” Blessed are they who so come before God’s presence with singing,<sup>45</sup> anticipating the great day when they shall be “set before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.”<sup>46</sup> Never, to the end of time, shall human need and human longing exceed the fulness of these songs of all the ages. Our Psalter is all-sufficient now, and it will be all-sufficient even when creation shall lift up the heart in glad response to the call that rings in its final strain, “Let every thing that hath breath praise Jehovah.”

<sup>42</sup> 1 John i. 3; Ps. xxii. 22, *cf.* Heb. ii. 11, 12.

<sup>44</sup> Col. iii. 16.

<sup>45</sup> Ps. xcv. 2.

<sup>43</sup> Zeph. iii. 17.

<sup>46</sup> Jude 24.

## THE DEVOTIONAL VALUE OF THE PSALTER

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**U**TILITY is the one test ordinarily applied by which to judge of the worth of things. That which has little worth in itself will be highly prized if it meet some want or serve some good end in life. On the other hand, that which has intrinsic value, unless it can be put to some good use, is likely to be lightly esteemed. The Bible is a book of merit. Yet there is no ready standard of measurement by which to rightly estimate its value, and its rating must depend very largely on what it is to men by way of meeting some necessity in their lives or serving some good purpose. And even so, the utility test applied to it, or any portion of it, will to some be worthless, to others priceless. To the godless it will be useless, to the godly indispensable. The former, having no affection for God to be cherished, no graces to be called into exercise, no desires to be gratified, no habits of worship to be maintained, no demand for assistance in drawing near to God in seasons of worship and communion with Him, will have little, if any, use for the Word of God. But one who loves God and wants to love Him more, who walks with God, but wants to walk closer, who has the Spirit of God in his heart, but wants to realize His presence and power more fully, who has made some attainments in the divine life, but wants to go on to what is higher and greater, makes much of the Word of God, because he finds that under its influence knowledge increases, love grows, faith is quickened, hopes brightened, and the sweet experiences of the Christian life are made sweeter. And yet, to no portion of it, for inflaming the heart with devotion to God, keeping alive and in exercise

the gifts and graces of the Spirit in the soul, will the devout turn with a greater relish or keener appreciation of its helpfulness for that purpose than to the Psalter.

The Psalter, like every other Book of the Bible, is given to the world for some one special purpose, on account of which it is to be valued as no other. As to Genesis, those who search the Scriptures turn to it for the truth about the birth of worlds and God's part in the affairs of the world while it was yet young. As to Exodus, they turn to it for the wonderful story of God's compassion for His chosen people when bondmen in Egypt, and the outworking of His love and mercy toward them by which they were redeemed. As to Leviticus, they turn to it for the truth about God's appointments for His people regarding their sacrifices and services in the Tabernacle and Temple. So passing by all others, we come to the Psalter with a like conception concerning it, viz., that God had a purpose as distinct and definite in this Book of the Bible as in Genesis, or John, in Romans, or the Revelation. Just what that was may not lie so near the surface as in some other Books of the sacred Scriptures. In the Fourth Psalm there is to be found a statement that comes to our aid in the effort to find what the supreme aim of God may have been in giving this Book to the world. In its connection it reads as follows: "O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn My glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after lies? But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for Himself: the Lord will hear when I call unto Him." Here is a class of persons the nearest and dearest to God of all in the world, an inner circle who are heaven's favorites, for whom the best in God's possession is not too good. What more natural than to suppose that in this revelation of the mind and will of God to men there should be found one Book written with this class in mind above all others; one Book in which God might have a heart-to-heart talk as a fond Father with His children; one Book in which His sons and daughters might be let into some of the secrets of the family life, and know

what in their conduct, character, and worship would be most pleasing to the Father; one Book suited to the peculiar tastes, habits, wants, experiences, and longings of such as are chosen of God and set apart unto Himself. On the supposition that He did give to the world one such Book, no one with any knowledge of the Bible would ever think of it being any other portion of the inspired Word than that contained in the Psalter. It would not be too much to say that the Word of God would be an imperfect Book if it did not contain one portion the supreme object of which was to supply fuel for the fire kindled in the heart by the Holy Ghost. It is not the intention to underrate any other part of the sacred Word, even for the most devout, but it is the intention to affirm that for devotional purposes there is nothing in or out of it equal to the Psalter. It is the devotional Book of the Scriptures, and as such is prized and used. It meets every want of such as would live near to God. It fills a large place in the lives of such as would daily open their hearts to God in prayer, praise, and meditation upon truths fitted to inflame their hearts with greater zeal for His glory, more love and affection for His truth, Church, and people. In proof of this no evidence is more convincing than the Book itself. Let us not select a copy fresh from the press, but the favorite Bible of some experienced Christian, some good old man or woman who can truthfully say of the Word of God that it is more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. The favorite Bible of such will show usage without and within, but nowhere so much as that portion lying between Job and Proverbs. Find in that Book the Twenty-Third Psalm, the Thirty-Second, the Fifty-First, the One Hundred and Third, and the precious One Hundred and Thirtieth, and each one will be blurred, bleared, and tear-stained possibly, because on these their dear souls had so often feasted and in them found so much to make their meditation sweet before God. It is not only the Book that God placed in the very heart of the Bible, but it is and ever will be the Book for

the heart and life, because it anticipates every want and satisfies the longings of the soul as no other.

There are many and good reasons why men and women of devout minds and hearts find in this Book so much to attract them to it and to fill them with keen appreciation of it. A few of the many may be noted:

*First.* Its personal pronouns have much to do with the fascination this Book has for the sons and daughters of God—its reiteration of “I,” “My,” and “Me.” True it is that these same pronouns are found elsewhere in the Scriptures, but nowhere are they so plentiful as in the Psalms; and there they are more plentiful, possibly, than in all the Word of God combined outside of the Psalter. No thoughtful reader of the Word of God can fail to notice the oft-recurrence of these little but significant words in this Book of Praise. They have a mission, and an important one. What God wanted to accomplish by this Book was to bring the truth close home to the heart of those for whom it was more especially intended. Relationship to, and ownership of, what it contains for the souls of God’s own people in this world is the one thing upon which God relies for the power and influence of this Book over His people. Two gentlemen were passing along the highway side by side. The one said to the other, “This is a beautiful farm we are passing.” “What do you see in it to admire?” asked the other. “Oh, its fertile fields, its unfailing springs, its flowing brooks, and its magnificent improvements.” “All that I see and admire, too, as much as you, but what interests me most of all is the fact that it belongs to me,” said the other.

To such as have any knowledge of the habits of the shepherd with his flock it would be hard to find any better way to express the truth about the Saviour’s devotion to His followers than to liken Him to the shepherd. His love for, His care of, His readiness to suffer for, His followers could not more charmingly be expressed. This is what they see and admire in Him; and yet what does every friend of Christ find in that

Psalm to give it favor and influence over his heart and life? Is it not the frequent recurrence of "I," "My," and "Me"? "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." The best of all is, He belongs to me. That is what makes this Psalm precious, and for that reason it has become the favorite song of the Book possibly, though many others get close to the heart and bring the heart close to God also. It is one thing to say the Lord is a rock, a fortress, a deliverer, a buckler, a horn of salvation, and a high tower, as in the Eighteenth Psalm. It is another thing to read and sing of Him as my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my strength, my trust, my buckler, my horn of salvation, and my high tower. Someone has said that personal religion consists largely in a right setting of the personal pronouns of the Bible. "My Beloved is mine, and I am His," is the sum of all that a saint cares to realize in the way of the joy and happiness of the Christian life. God Himself knows and feels the effect of a pronoun, and hence His constant reference to His people as "My people" and His pleasure in thus claiming relationship to, and ownership of, them. He knew what would knit the soul of a saint and truth together, and bring them near to Himself—a sense of belonging to God, and the feeling that God belonged to them.

*Second.* There is in it much to put a song into the heart and soul into the song. It is natural for such as are saved to sing; God says so: "He hath put a new song into my mouth, our God to magnify." Why? "Because He brought me out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet on the rock, and established my goings." Reason enough for singing His praise, is it not? But cross-currents come in upon the glad hearts of the saved ones in later experiences. Persecutions arise, and afflictions, trials, discouragements, heart sorrows of many kinds are experienced. The effect is a sigh instead of a song. Jeremiah, one of the most sorely tried of the prophets, found the way of relief, and gave the world the truth about it in these words: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; Thy

words became the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Such is the effect of God's Word by way of checking the chilling effects of adverse experiences in the lives of God's people. His words, with their soothing effect, may be found upon almost every page of the inspired Book, but nowhere as in the Psalter; it was written for the express purpose of meeting these conditions. The Psalter is the one book that does more to shed light on the dark problems of life, to solve its mysteries, and to account for the fiery trials to which many are subjected in their journey heavenward, than any other. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all." "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy Word." It is good to be afflicted when the effect is to loosen the hold which sin has on saints, and break the ill effects of the prosperity of the wicked. In the light of the truth of Christian experience as given to the children of God in this Book, there is either relief from fears and distress, or comfort equal to relief. Instruction and the testimony of like experiences are presented, and the result is that tears are wiped away, hearts that ache begin to feel anew the joy of salvation, and with renewed hope and courage sorrow and sighing flee away, and they come to Zion with songs, and with everlasting joy upon their heads. Such as find and feed on the words of this Book will find occasion to say again, as have the sad of heart in the past, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and they became the joy and rejoicing of my heart." But what if the words be not true? A little child of five summers was reading her first story book, and was talking about it as though it were a tale of real life. Her mother thought best to tell her that it was not true; that it was only what someone imagined, and that no such persons ever really existed. "Not true, mamma, not true?" and the child could not finish the story; it lost all its attraction for her when she found it to be but fiction. One can find sentiments sublime and beautiful in the devotional compositions of human authors, but they may be true, and they may not. But when

one makes the Psalter his praise-book, and in it finds the words that quiet his fears and put a song into his heart, there is the added happy effect of knowing that what serves this good purpose is of God and not man, and therefore that it is true and trustworthy. Being inspired and infallible, one can sing knowing that he is singing the very Word of God. This is what puts soul into the song.

*Third.* By this Book the path of the wicked is robbed of its charms and the ways of the righteous become positively enchanted ground. In His Sermon on the Mount the Saviour speaks of the wide gate and broad way that lead to destruction, and the strait gate and narrow way that lead to everlasting life. We have the truth about these two ways from the same lips in the Psalter. The substance of all that is said bearing upon these two classes is packed into the First Psalm. "Oh, the blessednesses of the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful: but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate day and night." And the last word in that same song is equally impressive, "the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish." The one man walks in the light of God's countenance, the other lives without so much as one ray of light or comfort either for the life that now is or that which is to come. To that is added two striking pictures of the truth about each: the one is like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season, his leaf shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper; but the ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. There is nothing in common between these two classes. Blessings upon blessings abound for the righteous—beauty, usefulness, and prosperity in this world, with heaven and happiness unending in the life to come. The other is as light and as worthless as chaff, wretched and miserable here, without anything to look forward to but continued misery and wretchedness without end beyond the judg-



ment seat. The effect of this delineation upon everyone who has turned his back upon the ways of the wicked, and found his way into the path of the righteous, is to increase his contentment and end all interest in, or regrets for, the things forsaken and left behind in order to walk with God while here, and so live as to see His face and be with Him hereafter. Thus the Psalter becomes a Book by which all who make themselves familiar with its teachings find themselves living loose to the world, and inclined to cleave to the company of the godly and the practices of such as would deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world. Thus it is made to serve the purpose of God as a book for the devout, by increasing their devotion and their readiness to conform more closely and affectionately to the ways of the upright.

*Fourth.* There is much in it to inspire to better things and lift the saint to a higher plane of living before God. Some have found in these songs sentiments to which there was no response in their own hearts, sentiments so exalted and beyond what they had attained to in their own experience that the effect has been to check rather than cherish the state of heart they were intended to promote. Such lofty strains as these may be cited: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, O Lord, and in the earth Whom do I desire besides Thee?" "My soul fainteth for the longing it hath unto Thy commandments"; or, "I will rise at midnight to give thanks unto Thee, because of Thy judgments"; "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." These and many similar strong expressions of devotion to God, His house and law, seem so far beyond their experience that some question whether or not they may dare to believe themselves Christians, since they do not find these things quite so precious as these words would make them out to be. All such fears subside at once when it is remembered that in these lofty ideals for the hearts of His chosen in this world God does not expect everyone to find these things true to the letter at all

stages of the Christian life. But he does set the standard to which He wants everyone to attain to in what is thus made to express the feelings and desires of the best of men and women among His children here. Paul would have no trouble with such expressions of the heart's devotion to these things, because he could say, "I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." In such words as these of the Psalter above quoted he could have the mark set before him and be moved to attain unto it. These strong expressions present no objection to such words for our songs and silent musing before God. Yea, that is what God put such thoughts before the mind and heart of His people for, that they may not be content to live on the lower plane, but may strive after the higher and better. God would have His saints read these words day by day, sing them over and over again, all the while striving to find an answer to them in their own heart, and to find themselves measuring up to the same high standard of Christian experience and sentiment. Thus the Psalter becomes a savor of life unto life, and God's good purpose regarding His chosen ones is accomplished by this book of devout sentiments and lofty ideals.

*Fifth.* Because of what God breathed into the Psalter of the truth about Himself, it will ever be to the devout a favorite portion of the Word. The one supreme object of affection is Christ to a Christian, or God in Christ. That this is true let God Himself bear witness in the fact that He gave His people such words as these to make their own: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul for Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: When shall I come and appear before God?" "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary."

It is doubtful whether there is anything one can say to God, or of God, more pleasing to Him than what is thus made to express suitably, and not too fervently, the way good men feel about God. God delights in such sentiments of soul concerning Himself, and takes great pleasure in cherishing and satisfying them. To such as say with Moses, "show me Thy glory," He is quick to respond and say, as to him, "I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee." And as Moses was privileged to look upon all the glory of God that he could live in the presence of, so his God still continues to pass by and to take like pleasure in proclaiming His glory in many ways. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork; day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." Even these manifestations of Himself are not without merit to men and women of devout minds. But from these they turn to the revelation God gives of Himself in the Scriptures, and they find the precious truth about Him breathed into every page of His sacred Word. Some of the best things, by way of proclaiming His glory, which are found elsewhere in the Scriptures are repeated in the Psalter. The story of creation as told in the Psalms is about as vivid and impressive as in Genesis. God's providential care over individuals, families, nations, and His chosen people more especially, is made to pass before the mind again, with added sidelights, the effects of which are to reveal the truth more clearly as to His wonderful interest in the affairs of this world. Jesus said that a sparrow falleth not to the ground without God's notice. Much to the same effect about God's care of the birds of the air and the beasts of the field will be found in the songs of Zion. And if one wants to know about His perfections in distinct outline, let him turn to the Psalter, in which not an attribute of His being is overlooked. His goodness and His greatness, His justice and His holiness, His faithfulness and His truthfulness, His love and His mercy, His hatred of iniquity and His delight in such as keep His law—

all these rays of light and truth about Himself are made to shine so bright in this Book that it seems safe to say that nowhere in the Word has He focused the light of His glory in rays so bright and beautiful as in the Psalms.

This is the crowning merit of the Psalms as furnishing matter for praise. It is a reason why the Psalter is prized by such as would acquaint themselves with God, and be at peace with Him. It stands the test of utility because it fills a void in the life of a saint, meets many demands of such as walk with God and hold communion with Him day by day; it satisfies souls longing for God as fully as can be until they get where they can see Him face to face, and no longer as through a glass darkly. By it the fire is made to burn anew in the heart, zeal is rekindled, character is developed, sin is subdued, holiness increases, and the whole man is made to partake of the beauty of holiness more and more day by day. A book into which God has breathed so much of Himself becomes a mirror reflecting His glory, before which, and near to which, to put oneself is to make sure of being changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

## THE DOCTRINAL COMPLETENESS OF THE PSALTER

BY THE REV. E. B. STEWART, CHICAGO, ILL.

**D**OCTRINES are many and varied, but their centers are few. In fact, we may group all teaching about two great centers, namely, God and the universe. The teaching concerning God in the Psalter, how wonderfully rich and inspiring it is! God, the Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, is lauded as Creator, praised as Benefactor, extolled as King, revered as Judge, magnified as Redeemer, confided in as High Priest, trusted as Shepherd, blessed as Comforter, adored as Friend, loved as Father, worshiped as the one only living and true God, our own God, Jehovah of Hosts, the refuge and strength of His people now, as He will be their portion forever. No quality of His being is slighted, no phase of His life is forgotten. Nowhere else is found exhibited so completely and exalted with such propriety and adequateness the fullness of God with which we are to be filled through the prayer of faith, no, not even in other portions of the Book itself.

In the same manner we have the fullness of the universe set forth in the Psalter. The universe is of God. It is His handiwork. The sea is His; He made it. The earth and the fullness thereof belong to the Lord. He waters the earth and crowns it with His goodness. He holds the sea in the hollow of His hand. He rules over wind and wave. The lightnings flash, the thunders roar, the hoar-frost is scattered like ashes, the sun goes forth in his daily circuit, the moon sheds her pale light, trees spring up, grasses grow, beasts hunt their food, birds sing, creeping things fill their place, and man labors and waits, all by the

word of His power, and according to the pleasure of His will. This universe is His holy temple, and everything in it saith, Glory. The only exception is perverted mind and its products.

Fallen angels with their head, the Prince of Darkness, lead this rebellious force. Concerning this Adversary, this Fowler who snares the souls of men, we may say that whatever the teaching of the Psalter is respecting him and his, it is the same as that of the New Testament. The Psalmist says, "They sacrificed their sons and daughters unto demons" (cvi. 37), which is just what Paul says in 1 Cor. x. 20: "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God." Likewise we may speak concerning angels who are set to guard His own, and to pursue His and their enemies. What the Psalmist meant, the writer to the Hebrews meant. Brevity requires us to say that whatever be the correct notion of angels, good or bad, the Psalter and the New Testament are one in their view.

Our chief concern must be with man, the crown of creation and the climax of its shame. Created in honor, with dominion over the works of God, we find him sunk to the level whence he is compelled to cry out, "Behold I was brought forth in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." He on whom God looked with pleasure at first cannot now stand before the Lord, if He be strict to mark iniquity. He calls from the depths and is taught that the way is open for the contrite penitent to return to the God Who made man for His companionship and pities him in his weakness and frailty. Foul sin can be washed from the soul, and one made whiter than the snow. A new heart can be created where the Spirit will dwell. The costly Ransom has been provided, the great Sacrifice has been made. The blessedness of a man to whom the Lord will not impute iniquity, and whose sin is covered, is gratefully acknowledged in full many a song of praise. Redeemer, Saviour, Father, Friend speak of salvation so sure and fellowship so sweet that rapture thrills the being of the redeemed of the Lord, who calls upon his soul to bless and magnify His name and upon the

children of men to praise the Lord for His wonderful works and for His great goodness.

Counting the cost, his Redeemer's death-song tells him of pierced hands and feet, of snarling dogs and bellowing beasts of Bashan which made up the mob of evil-doers that compassed the dying Saviour about and made Him seem a worm and no man. With grief of heart and loathing of sin that caused such suffering, he turns with overflowing gratitude to Him Who has saved him and accepts His assurance of eternal brotherhood. This brings the joy and peace of salvation, the guidance and help of the Spirit, ennobles life, makes it right before God and man, so that he may stand strong in His sight and move out on the pathway to glory with clean hands and a pure heart. He becomes the ally of the King of glory in crushing the proud oppressor's might, in saving the needy, helping the poor, defending the fatherless and widow, and in trampling down the foes that rashly persist in their opposition to the Christ Who is to be acknowledged by all kings of earth, by every kindred, tribe, and tongue, as Jehovah, to the praise of God the Father.

While taught to respect the authority of God in Church and State, as represented in the Lord's anointed, he is also taught that kings and rulers are servants and not tyrants, that fame and place and pelf are passing things, that truth and right shall ransom all people and be their strong tower and sure defense. The man blessed of God bows to no idol, bends before no wicked power, but is kind, compassionate, pure, liberal, just, merciful, a foe to every wrong, a friend to any wronged, afraid of no evil force, a faithful follower of a faithful Lord. To keep him firm and feed his soul, he has the blessedness of the one who abides in the courts of the Most High and worships Him in the presence of all the people. He has respect to the provision infinite wisdom has made for him here, and sublime confidence in the pleasures that are for evermore. The Shepherd Who leads him now will lead him all the way until he comes to the home of God, the place prepared for him and all who love the Lord.

While hell is real, so also is heaven. He knows that the first fruits of them that sleep have been garnered in Christ's enthronement, and he abides in the conviction that he shall awake to be eternally satisfied in His presence. Thus man is raised from the climax of shame to again shine as the crown of creation, and that, too, with a luster that eternity shall not dim. The distinctions between the Mosaic and the Christian economies are ended, the song of Moses and the Lamb, now blended into one, greets his ears, and the soul that has sung on his way to glory now sings in glory, as he will sing on his way through glory, "Great and marvelous are Thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the Ages. Hallelujah! Praise ye the Lord! Hallelujah!"

Can the wealth of the Psalter be exaggerated? Ask the finest of the world's word-painters, and you will hear them reply in the words of the Psalmist himself, "I cannot attain unto it." Ask those who have sounded the depths of the world's experiences, and they will speak of the wonderful works and thoughts of God in the words of the Psalter, "They are more than can be numbered." Gather the tributes that men have paid to the sterling worth and stalwart character of the souls that have fed on the Psalms by day and by night, who have loved them more than fine gold, and esteemed them sweeter than honey from the comb. Hear the evidence concerning the maligned Calvinists and Psalm-singers from even the detractors of their creed.

In Dr. E. W. Smith's "Creed of Presbyterians" there is a number of quotations from eminent writers such as Froude, Morley, Matthew Arnold, Emerson, Carlyle, Buckle, Green, Macaulay, Taine, John Fiske, Motley, Lecky, Renan, Bancroft, Henry M. Stanley, Emilio Castelar, and others who unite in glowing testimony concerning Calvinism and its fruits in character. He quotes Henry Ward Beecher as saying, "Men may talk as much as they please against the Calvinists and Puritans and Presbyterians, but you will find when they want to make an investment they have no objection to Calvinism or Puritanism or Presby-



terianism. They know that where these systems prevail, where the doctrine of men's obligation to God and man is taught and practiced, there their capital may be safely invested. They tell us that Calvinism plies men with hammer and chisel. It does; and the result is monumental marble. Other systems leave men soft and dirty; Calvinism makes them of white marble, to endure forever." James Russell Lowell says, "If the Calvinistic Churches are to be judged by the results of their teaching upon character and conduct, as seen in Scotland and New England, then these Churches are entitled to the highest praise. For the superiority is not solely in morality and intelligence, but in the prevalent sense of duty, in high ideals and inflexible principles, and, in short, in the consciousness of the spiritual world that is an eternal now with believers. After due allowance made for time-servers and hypocrites, I think there are among Calvinists more godly men, each living 'As ever in his great Taskmaster's eye,' than in any other branch of the Christian Church." Another writer says, "The world has never known a higher type of robust and sturdy manhood, nor a gentler, purer, or more lovable womanhood, than have prevailed among those peoples who have imbibed the principles of the Calvinistic creed, with its commingled elements of granitic strength and stability, and of supreme, because divine, tenderness and grace." And Froude adds, "Illustrious natures do not form themselves on narrow and cruel theories. Where we find a heroic life appearing as the uniform fruit of a particular mode of opinion, it is childish to argue in the face of fact that the result ought to have been different."

I return to remind you that these writers are speaking of the people of Scotland, Holland, France, England, and New England, and largely, if not wholly, of the periods when they were singing exclusively the Psalms; when the "Cotter's Saturday Night" was the common scene in all their homes. It is astounding that a creed that has so uniformly and continuously produced the character which is so grandly praised should come in for

so much maltreatment and misrepresentation. Why laud the crowd, and lash and lampoon the creed? Why maul the tree, and magnify its fruit? Why should a practice that is so uniformly productive of personal piety as is the use of the Psalms be so vigorously opposed as not being most suitable for public worship? I suspect there is not a minister present who has not more than once had brethren of other branches of the Church praise the character of our people, and then go away to join the crowd in maligning our positions. It is singular, isn't it? It certainly is a Biblical position that strong meat is necessary for stalwart Christianity. It is certainly a fact that the Psalter has fed the strongest lives of the world's history, at least since it came into use. It is worth noting where the line never wavered in the last great fight for the inspired Word, which is now turning into a rout for the critics of the old Book. The regiments of the Psalm-singing hosts are almost alone in their distinction of standing with unbroken line in this great Armagedon of the past half century.

Hymns arose in the experience of the Early Church for the express purpose of infusing heresy, and they have been an ally of that cause ever since, though not always with evil intent on the part of the writers. There is apparent an inferiority in style, a narrowness in view, an uncertainty, and often an untruthfulness, in doctrine in the average run of hymn-books as compared with the stately, broad, clear, and complete presentation of truths characteristic of the Psalter. This we find the users of hymns to declare with distressing regularity. One prominent minister is reported to have said that there are not a dozen hymns in the English language worthy of a place in the worship of the Church. Probably that is further than most would go, but it reveals a fact that is recognized by all thoughtful worshipers. Examination of a widely used hymn-book some years ago disclosed the fact that in its entire contents there was only the hymn which has the refrain, "Praise Him! Praise Him!" that could be called a praise song, and it is, as you know, a

rather attenuated imitation of the Hallelujah Psalms. How can people have adequate conceptions of praise when, with rare exceptions, they sing of nothing but their own feelings and failings?

It would not be difficult to point out the defective ethical teachings of the hymns. They do not have adequate teaching concerning the home, the State, and the Church. Right and equity are not put in proper and positive light. Can it be that we are reaping a harvest from such lack of teaching in the reign of lawlessness and unrighteousness which is upon our country? A minister in trying to coax one of our members to leave and to unite with his church went so far as to say that United Presbyterians did everything from a sense of duty, while he and his believed in a more liberal way of interpreting and applying things. Has duty ceased to be the way of glory in our fair land's muddled story of the present? The men named above paid tribute to our fathers largely on the ground of their unflinching devotion to duty toward God and man, as the Catechism led them to believe the Scriptures principally teach. The wildest sort of Antinomianism is taught and sung to-day, and is telling on men's lives. A gospel without a rigid sense of duty will never produce a right sort of people. So sounds the long refrain of history. It is pitiable weakness that leads men to say, "I was brought up too strictly." That is crying out against the hammer and chisel, and will never fashion stalwart character. It is interesting, pathetically so, to see how this fact is wrought out in the "Sabbath School Hymnal" now used in the Reformed Jewish Church. A copy of this came to my hand and is found to contain a very large proportion of the writings of uninspired men and to copy after the latest notions of the best hymnals. Thus in the house of its ancient friends the Psalter has received a heart-thrust that bespeaks the traitor to the pattern given on the Mount. The Jew has begun to cater in his song to the course of this world, and it does not add to his credit.

In the best book that has come to my notice recently—and of the making of hymn-books there seems to be no end—there is an unfortunate tendency to run in a lot of crude notions about the Second Coming of Christ. While I do not wish to take sides in this old discussion, yet I do wish to say that it is unfair in the present status of the case to sing such a mass of speculation into innocent minds with respect to that about which the Bible is comparatively silent. It would be better to maintain the dignified reserve of the Psalms. Their teaching is as full as the teaching of Scripture elsewhere justifies.

Time forbids the citation of other deficiency, insufficiency, or redundancy found in the teaching of other hymnals. A somewhat extensive examination has left a deep impression respecting the well-balanced presentation of all truths, and the maintenance of the due proportion of truth to truth as required by other parts of the Bible, which is found in the Psalter when compared with the unbalanced presentation and unsustained proportion in the hymnals. A hymnal impresses one as being a special pleader for favorite phrases and notions. The Psalter impresses one as being a pleader for the whole truth, covering all relations of God to His universe, and of His creatures to Him and to one another. Careful comparison will fix this impression in any unprejudiced mind. For the purpose of presenting truth in proper proportion and with just emphasis the Psalter stands as conspicuously alone as it does in the loftiness of its position in literature and devotion, for which it has received such abounding and merited eulogy. Herein “mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other”; and thus wedded by divine sanction they are supreme in their adaptation to the all-absorbing work of leading us to walk in His way, and to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth.

## THE DOCTRINAL COMPLETENESS OF THE PSALTER

BY THE REV. HARRY H. CRAWFORD, M. A., ARGYLE, N. Y.

**B**EING a divinely given manual of praise, we would naturally expect the Psalter to furnish the soul with all needful instruction. Left to draw our information from the Psalms, what would we learn about God, about man, about the work of Christ, about the future?

Taking no other texts than those which they furnish, an almost complete system of theology might be arranged from the Psalms.

I. What do we learn about God? "If our women knew your God they would sing to Him," was the pathetic utterance of an African woman when one of the missionaries was tenderly describing the love of God. Ignorant as she was, she knew that a knowledge of God was necessary to His praise. Religion begins with God. All depends upon the nature of the God upon Whom we look. Men are like their conceptions of God. A man's thought of God determines his conduct and his destiny. The gods of antiquity were of infamous character. They are described as envious and gluttonous, base, lustful, and revengeful. These being the gods, what would the people be? They lived like their gods. What better could be expected of them?

The Psalms portray a God Who is infinite in all His perfections. We learn in the Psalms that God is an eternal being, existing before the birth of mountains, or worlds, even from everlasting. We find that He is an unchangeable being, Who of old laid the foundations of the earth and created the heavens, which, when they wax old, He shall fold up as a vesture, while He remaineth the same, and His years have no end. We are told of His manifold wisdom, in the light of which all the

treasures of the earth have been formed. We find that justice is a characteristic of God, justice and judgment being the very habitation of His throne. We rejoice in the portrayal of His faithfulness, which, we are told, shall be established in the very heavens. We learn of His all-pervading presence, not only in the highest heavens, but likewise in the lowest hell, in the uttermost parts of the earth, and in the dwelling place of darkness. Best of all, we here discover that God is not a being of lowest passions, but a God of absolute holiness, Who has no pleasure in wickedness, and Who will not permit evil to dwell with Him. He who takes the God of the Psalter for his model will have a character resplendent with all virtues.

II. What do we learn about man? We are here informed of man's supreme place in the creative work of God. Looking at himself in the light of the heavens, the work of God's fingers; comparing himself with the moon and the stars which God has ordained, he cries, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him?" But whatever man's thought of his own littleness in the universe, we find in the Psalms that God thinks differently. Says Henry Van Dyke, "In the house of the rich man there are many treasures, rare books, costly pictures, splendid marbles, shining gems; but the little child who bears his image and likeness, and that looks up into his face with smiling love, is the dearest jewel of them all."

So in the Psalms we see that the great Father thinks most of His child, and has given him the supreme place in the universe, having made him but little lower than Himself, having crowned him with glory and honor, and given him dominion over all the works of His hands.

However, we are also taught the sad fact of man's sinfulness. We see the grief of the divine heart, as, looking down upon the children of men, God saw that all had gone back, until there was none that did good. Many are the expressions which reveal not only God's hatred of sin, but likewise the sinner's

character, the bitter fruits of sin, the punishment of sin, and sin as a power that separates from God. Notwithstanding man's place of supremacy in the universe, we find him now a wanderer, and many are the utterances, fit expressions of broken-heartedness, as the wanderer seeks to find his way back to God.

III. What do we learn about the work of Christ? The story of Christ comes as a message of good news in the midst of sadness and desolation. One day in July, 1863, a faithful negro smuggled a paper into Libby prison which told sad news for the prisoners. They read, "Meade defeated at Gettysburg"; "The Northern Army fleeing into the mountains"; "The Campaign in Disaster." The poor fellows broke down and cried like babies. They lost all hope. But later in the day another paper was brought in, and one read to the others these headlines, "Grant has captured Vicksburg and taken 30,000 prisoners"; "Meade defeated Lee at Gettysburg, taking 14,000 prisoners." The revulsion of feeling was almost too great to endure. The men were now wild with joy, and the song of hope thrilled every heart and broke forth from hundreds of lips. Thus we have seen the record of man, defeated by sin, and bound in fetters of bondage. We have been saddened and hope has fled. But when we come to look upon the work of Christ as here set forth, we find good news. We read of the blessed work of redemption wrought and victory won. The sadness gives way, while songs of joy thrill every breast, for "His right hand and holy arm hath gotten Him the victory."

The name of Jesus may not be found in the Psalms, but what matter when the face of Jesus is there? We do not find the story of the Saviour's birth, life, and death, as we find it recorded in the Gospels; yet where else can we find such declarations of His work as Prophet, Priest, and King? David, God's chosen servant, was a type of Christ in his official relations, both in suffering and in triumph. He uses language which finds its full meaning only in Christ. With another we may say, "David's afflictions are the Messiah's sufferings; David's penitential sup-

plications are the supplications of the Messiah in agony; David's songs of triumph and thanksgiving are the Messiah's songs of triumph and victory over sin and death and hell. In a word, there is not a page of this Book of Psalms in which the reader will not find his Saviour, if he reads with a view of finding Him."

The work of Christ also provides for the application of redemption to the lives of men. The Psalms tell us how to be saved. When the Moravian missionaries entered Greenland, they spent many years trying to teach the people about God, creation, and the nature of the soul. They made no converts. As one of the missionaries was one day making a translation of the Gospel of John, a native came and said, "Tell us about the Book." As he read John iii. 16 the native's eyes kindled with a light never seen there before, and he exclaimed, "What is that? Tell me that again. That is what I want to know. I want to know how to be saved." The Psalms tell a man the way to be saved, whether it be in songs which voice the longing cry for a new heart, or the earnest expression of saving faith, or the cry of deep penitence for sin, or the joy of sin forgiven, or the resolution to flee to the Saviour, the only portion in the land of life. The full note of the glorious gospel is sounded in the Psalms. The whole song of salvation may here be learned.

IV. What do we learn about the future? The Psalter abounds in songs of the future. Death, that silent messenger which comes to open the portals of the future, is vividly portrayed in the Psalms. But if we have the death-songs, we have likewise the joyous songs of the resurrection. Death is a valley of darkness, but there is a glorious light beyond. In the environs of Berlin sleeps the lovely queen of King William of Germany. Her tomb, which stands alone in a forest, is one of peculiar formation. At the entrance of the tomb the light is dim and somber, but at the farther end the light pours through the transparent windows in radiant splendor. The gloom at the entrance represents the darkness which surrounds the entrance of the valley



of death, while the radiance of the golden sunlight pictures the brightness of the blessed life beyond the grave, when the soul at the resurrection morn, awakened in the likeness of Jesus Christ, can sing the song of satisfaction. Beyond the resurrection is the judgment scene, which is here depicted in all majesty, the floods being called on to clap their hands, and the hills to rejoice before Him Who cometh to judge the world in righteousness.

We have read of a chamber in the Catacombs, used about the time of Julius Cæsar, where every tomb has emblems of the skull and crossbones; while near at hand is another chamber of a generation later, and, lo! Christ's teaching has carved upon each stone a lily, eloquent with immortal hope. While the thought of immortality is nowhere definitely expressed in the Psalter, there are nevertheless passages in which the hope of not falling a prey to death is expressed so broadly that we have the whole thought of immortality brought before us. Here are songs which tell us of pleasures at God's right hand for evermore, and of God's house being the dwelling-place forever. The Psalms breathe of the future, of heaven, ever looking beyond the things which are seen and temporal to the things which are unseen and eternal. They take their view of things in relation to eternity, and their music is the song of immortality.

Thus we find the Psalms presenting full and sufficient revelation concerning God, man, the work of Christ, and the future. We have been able to touch only upon some of the mountain tops. But the hill slopes and the valleys are likewise covered with richest pasturage of truth. As in political affairs the Scottish statesman, seeking to influence the people, asked for the songs of a people, rather than for its profound and laborious literature, so in the religious life of a people there is nothing destined to wield a greater influence than the songs of worship. What an antidote in these poetical statements of truth to the artificial and lifeless statements of doctrine now so common!

Should not these divinely given songs, complete in their presentation of truth, be satisfying, prized, and universally used as

a manual of praise? I have heard how some of the fishermen on the lonely coasts of Brittany go out in their boats to fish while the women stay at home. Then sometimes when the boats are out fogs and vapors gather, hiding sun or stars, so that the men know not which way to guide their vessels homeward. At such times the women and children go down to the shore and sing their household songs. Far away on the waters, perplexed and bewildered, the men hear the music as it floats out to sea. Now all their bewilderment vanishes. They know the right direction for home, and taking up the oars, they ply them earnestly, answering back meanwhile in songs of their own, which tell the loved ones on the shore that they are coming. Thus, tossed on the sea of life, oftentimes perplexed in faith, in a day when there are so many songs afloat that are filled with false or uncertain notes, the soul of man needs for its guidance the true home songs of heaven's own inspiration, the songs which come from the Homeland itself, the songs which come direct from the Father's heart.

## THE ETHICS OF THE PSALMS

BY THE REV. A. C. DOUGLASS, DES MOINES, IOWA

SINCE the Psalms are an important part of the inspired Scriptures, and so largely didactic, we may naturally look for them to set forth the highest and purest moral standards. The ethical teaching of the Psalms is in a sense incidental to the main purpose of the Book, but none the less prominent or important. In these days, when there is much looseness of religious thinking, with its consequent confusion of moral ideas, it is well to call attention to the inspired Psalmody, not only in its relation to the purest worship, but to the highest morals. A much larger use of the Psalms is needed to-day to tone up the ethical standards of not a few who exalt a narrow humanitarianism as the *summum bonum* of pure and undefiled religion. We hear much empty talk decrying creed and exalting character. It has almost assumed the form of "creed versus character." I frankly confess to little sympathy with most of those who harp on this string. I believe in creed *and* character, and insist that the former determines the latter. Tell me what a man believes, and I will tell you what he is. But we should always be glad to discuss the so-called "practical" features of religion. And we do well to undertake to show how the incomparable Psalms bear upon everyday life, conduct, and character.

1. We find the ethical standards of the Psalms in keeping with the best Christian ideals. There is running all through them the truest and noblest conceptions of moral conduct. When the great thinkers of antiquity were struggling in pagan darkness by the flickering light of human reason, seeking to find out the "ultimate good," and to evolve from their speculations some system of ethics for the direction of the individual and society,

there was already in existence in Hebrew jurisprudence, history, and poetry a true philosophy of "good," divine in origin, perfect in conception, and suited to the varied conditions of all the human race. That ethical philosophy was embodied in the Hebrew Bible, and it found expression in a peculiar manner in the lyrics of the Hebrew bards. In these songs we find law-giver and prophet, as well as poet, at their best.

A writer in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, tracing the progress of ethical philosophy from ancient times down to the present, says: "Obedience, patience, benevolence, purity, humility, alienation from the 'world' and the 'flesh,' are the chief and striking features which the Christian ideal of practice suggests, so far as it can be placed side by side with that commonly accepted in Græco-Roman society." It may be added, however, that these graces are by no means peculiar to the ethics of the Christian era. They belonged to the Hebrew code of morals, and they are strikingly in evidence in the Psalms—placed there before these pagan philosophies were ever dreamed of. A disciple of St. Bernard of the twelfth century says, "The Psalter is a mirror of Christian virtue." Hooker pronounced the Psalms "a mighty augmentation to all virtue, . . . a strong confirmation to the most perfect among us." Joseph Parker declares all the parts of the Bible are in the Psalms. "There," says he, "is Sinai interpreted, and there the Cross gives welcome to contrition." Such has been the universal testimony of many of the most moral and spiritual people of all the ages. The ethical element of the Psalms is a striking feature. The key-note is righteousness. The very first Psalm is an incomparable picture of the ideal man. The moral teaching of the whole Book is that of Sinai as interpreted in the Sermon on the Mount.

2. In their conception and presentation of God, His worship and His law, the Psalms especially make for the highest types of moral character. In no Book in the Bible do we find more complete views of His glorious attributes and perfections. Men's moral standards are high and worthy only as they get right ideas

of God. The life is powerfully influenced by the way in which God is set before the mind and heart. How the singing of these songs of God stimulate the desire for holy living, strengthen the purpose to strive for pure character, and throttle every evil propensity of the old nature! Here God's holy character shines forth as an example to man as in no other hymns. His law is pressed upon the heart as of more value than "fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Ps. xix. 10). Love for that law is taught in songs which make the heart kindle in reverence for it, and determine the life to be ruled by it (Ps. cxix. 159, 163, 167). They breathe throughout a fervent desire for heart purity. Morality is seen first as a thing of the inner life. They teach that God desires truth in the inward parts (Ps. li. 6, 17). We instinctively feel that true character depends upon right motives and pure thoughts, as well as cleanness of outward life, when we sing, as in Psalm cxxxix.:

"Search me, O God, and know my heart,  
Try me and know my thoughts;  
And see if there be any wicked way in me  
And lead me in the way everlasting."

3. The Psalms cover a wide field in their ethical application. They touch all the varied relations of life from the moral standpoint. The highest ideals of outward behavior are set before the conscience. "Depart from evil, and do good" (Ps. xxxiv. 14) is their general exhortation. They are also very specific. Personal integrity (vii. 8; xxvi. 1, 11), a life separate from wrongdoers (vi. 8; cxli. 4), benevolence toward the poor (xli. 1; cxii. 9), regard for constituted authority (xx. 1), obedience to law (cxix. 1-8), love for brethren (cxxxiii. 1-3), love for enemies (vii. 4), good returned for evil (xxxv. 13, 14), home-life free from immorality (ci. 1-7), purity of thought and speech (xvii. 3; xxxix. 1; xxiv. 4), contentment amid the ills of life (xxxvii. 1), patience in the presence of the prosperous wicked (xxxvii. 7, 34; lxxiii. 3), business honesty (xv. 5), sobriety, sincerity (xv. 2), hatred of

every false way (xcvii. 10; ci. 3; cxix. 104)—such are only a few of the moral virtues inculcated in these songs. Then there are the many references to evil and evildoers, warnings against disobedience, lying (v. 6), flattery (xii. 2, 3), profanity (lxxiii. 9; cxxxix. 20), arrogance (lxxiii. 6), oppression (xii. 5), extortion (lxii. 10), tainted money (xxxix. 6; lii. 7), perjury, bribery (xxvi. 10), pride (cxix. 21), deceit (xxxvi. 3), dishonesty (xxxvii. 21), covetousness (cxix. 36), worry (xxxvii. 1, 7), etc. Dr. John Watson says of the Fifteenth Psalm that there is no ethical hymn like it. The spirit of this Psalm alone, generally adopted as the standard of morals in the financial and political life of this country, would at once put an end to civic corruption and misrule. It would reform the methods of the stock markets and boards of trade. It would drive boodler and grafter from executive office, legislative hall, and judicial bench. It would make restitution of ill-gotten millions to their rightful owners.

There is enough moral dynamic in the Tenth Psalm, if it should become the battle hymn of the Church against the saloon, to destroy in a year every one of the 250,000 rum-shops that curse our country. The fraud, perjury, bribery, social impurity, and political chicanery, the continuous exposure of which is showing such low moral perceptions even in men high in the social scale, would not have been possible if the Church at large had remained loyal to the divinely appointed hymnal, and if she had been singing these magnificent moral and religious odes into the hearts and affections of the people with the same enthusiasm and persistency with which she has been stuffing them with the flimsy, sectarian, and often error-laden rhymes that enter so largely into the hymn-books of these days. For every ethical exigency that can come to man or nation the songs of God will be found to meet the case. They are both a cure and a preventive of low moral conditions.

4. The Psalms present high motives and powerful incentives for right living. The favor shown to the righteous, the blessings assured the benevolent and the pure, the great rewards in keep-

ing the law, the promises to the godly man and to his children after him, are beautifully set forth in many of the Psalms (i. 1-3; cvi. 3; xxxvii. 25; cxii. 1-10). On the other hand, the consequences of an evil course are faithfully portrayed. It is made plain that the wages of sin is death, and, as Tholuck says, "that the divine government of the world is based on justice, that evil is ever condemned by its own destructible laws, and that its destruction will sooner or later be made manifest" (i. 4; v. 6; ix. 17; lii. 4, 5; lv. 23).

5. The ethical teaching of the Psalms is positive in character and free from frothy and sickly sentimentalism. Spurgeon says, "Holy men have strong passions, and are not so mincing and charitable as smooth-tongued latitudinarians would have them. He who does not hate evil does not love good." There is a dangerous sentiment abroad in the world that, lacking in moral perception, slurs over the questionable in conduct, excuses the criminal and condones the crime without any sense of right or reason. The very word "sin" grates more on the ears of some than the act of sin does on their souls. It is too harsh for their refined ears to hear sin denounced or the corruptions of the natural heart exposed. They want to hear much about love, but little about law; much about mercy, but nothing about justice.

To my mind this is incipient anarchy, and, carried to logical conclusion, it would subvert all law and authority. The ethical sense is dulled by æsthetic tastes. Good is seen through jaundiced eyes, and evil is a sort of unreal thing, not so bad after all. All this argues "a sickly piety and a morbid sense of moral feeling." It is this sort of thing that saps the Church of moral power and stalwart righteousness.

We find none of this insipid, spineless sort of ethics in the Psalms. Evil is given its proper names. There is no evasion or ambiguity; no minimizing of, trimming to, or compromising with, unrighteousness. Wrong is wrong, and right is right. Evildoers are warned in plain words. Sin is not sugar-coated. There is love of righteousness for righteousness' sake (cxix. 97).

There is the breathing of the deepest contrition for small, as well as great, transgression, and a genuine hatred for all evil-doing (cxxxix. 21, 22). In keeping with this plain, positive, and healthful sentiment against evil are the so-called "Imprecatory" Psalms. They do not, we are persuaded, militate against the highest ethical ideals. David's treatment of his personal enemies, showing them good for evil, ought to be sufficient answer to the charge that they are the maledictions of personal revenge. These Psalms have their place as expressing the awful condition and deserved rewards of the incorrigible enemies of Christ and His Kingdom. They are not inconsistent with the law of love.

6. The ethical value of the Psalms appears in a study of their fruits. It is seen in the high moral character developed in those who have most fully imbibed their spirit. It is noteworthy that the Psalms have been the constant food of the most pious souls. The loftier the moral and religious tone of a man, the more does he delight in these songs. Their influence may be seen in many who have led the forces of right against wrong. We need only to refer to the early disciples and other Christians who fed their faith and indomitable courage, in prison and dungeon and fire, with these songs of the Spirit, and whose moral character was at once the surprise and rebuke of the pagan world. Then on down in history were the Waldensian Psalm-singers, who preserved evangelical Christianity and pure morals from decay during the Dark Ages. And then again there were the heroes of the Reformation period. And no lover of truth calls in question the high moral character of these leaders in the movement that brought to its birth modern Christian civilization. The Psalms were the songs that prepared these men for the mighty struggles in which conscience and conviction of right were set against wrong in high places and in low. The Lollards of the Netherlands, the Huguenots of France, the Waldenses of Switzerland, the Puritans of England, the Covenanters of Scotland, and the Pilgrim Fathers who opened up this new world were moral giants of rich, red blood, as well as men of unswerving religious conviction. And



they could all sing David's Psalms without the book. True, many of them did not have books, but these songs were indelibly written on their hearts and consciences. It was true of all these as a French writer said of the Huguenots, "The effect of the Psalms on their character was wonderful. The Psalms nourished the moral life of a race of men such as the world perhaps will never see again."

We need scarcely take time to note that in the moral reforms of these later days the Psalms have inspired many of those who stand for the highest ideals in personal life, in society, and in the State. The One Hundred and Forty-Sixth Psalm has been known from the beginning as the "Crusade Psalm" of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. The Psalm-singers have championed National Reform most strenuously. They were for the most part the unrelenting foes of human slavery, and furnished more than their quota of men in the awful war that brought that institution to its downfall. They have stood loyally for the preservation of the Sabbath, not only for religious but humanitarian reasons. They may ever be depended upon in the fight against the iniquitous liquor traffic. They have not been backward to testify against the hidden things of darkness in the secret lodge. They have given no uncertain sound against all social evils. Moral reformers say that for some reason they find their most sympathetic and responsive audiences in Psalm-singing communions and communities. Men do not stand thus firm and strong for reform movements in society unless they have solid moral convictions and character. That the lovers of the Psalms have so generally stood for the highest moral ideals in private, social, business, and political life is one of the strongest testimonials to the ethical power and excellence of these inspired songs.

The saying has been often quoted, "Give me the making of a nation's songs, and I care not who makes her laws." One cannot realize the loss in moral power there would have been to the world if these songs of the inspired Hebrew poets had not been

so largely the psalmody of the Church for nearly three thousand years: Neither can we estimate what an impetus would be given the moral progress of the world to-day if the Church Universal would come back to her God-given heritage of song. Let such moral sentiments as these Psalms contain be constantly instilled by means of song into the life of a people, and the beneficent results upon conscience and character are immeasurable.

In conclusion, we would not be understood as exalting the second table of the Law above the first. We would not be guilty of substituting human character, however good, for the perfect righteousness of the divine Redeemer as a ground of salvation, or presume to save the world by holding up ethical standards instead of the Cross. The Psalms, like other portions of the Scriptures, lead us to "conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," and that the purest ethics is the fruit of such faith. The Psalms encourage sinful, imperfect man to trust in God's boundless grace for salvation, while they teach him to love and obey the law as a rule of life and make it his meditation day and night. Thus they help him in growing into the perfect likeness of his righteous and holy Maker. Let the Church be loyal to these glorious songs of the Spirit. Then will her practice conform more nearly to her profession, and men, seeing her good works, will glorify the Father Who is in heaven.

## THE ETHICS OF THE PSALMS

BY THE REV. WILLIAM J. MARTIN, D. D., FALL RIVER, MASS.

I AM aware that some will say that it is a far cry from ethics to lyrics. I am aware that many will smile, and that in the smile there may be scorn at the idea of subjecting poetry to the tests of moral science. Many will say that the purpose of songs, even songs of worship, is not to moralize their singers, and that judgment by the standards of philosophy is a judgment from which songs should be exempt. Reflection, however, ought to cause such speakers to modify what is hastily spoken.

All poetry is intensely moral or immoral in its spirit, and therefore in its effect. This is measurely true of the verse which deals with outward nature. It is very greatly true of the verse the theme of which is the passions and deeds of human beings. By the interpretation which it makes of life—and, as Matthew Arnold said, “poetry is at bottom a criticism of life”—poetry will confuse the judgments and pervert the sympathies, or it will clarify the vision and thrill the soul with admiration of the true and the good and the beautiful, and so direct the will by the admirations which it invokes. It may not be the chief aim of verse to influence morally, but that which may not be its chief aim will be its inevitable result.

Then unless the deterioration of our moral being, or the pleasure and improvement of moral being, are of no account, the application of the tests of moral science to poetry is not occasion for scorn or smile. It is seriously to be accepted as that which it were impropriety not to do.

This is to be done with respect to the Psalter. I am to answer the question, What is the ethical spirit which pervades the Hebrew lyrics which are called Psalms? What is the ethical

impulse which those poems give to those who place themselves in touch with them? And this is the answer: Of the ethical quality of the lyrics in the Book of Psalms that judgment may be rendered which was rendered when God looked upon His works in nature: Behold they are good, very good, exceedingly good.

*First.* I wish to show the superiority of the ethics of the Psalms to the ethics of the poetry of other ancient peoples than the Hebrews. In recent years the poems of the peoples who in long past centuries lived in the far-away countries of the Orient have been pressed on the attention of the modern people of Western lands. One great admirer of these poems, Professor Max Müller, has declared that "the poet of the East was a man who in the noble army of prophets deserves a place by the side of David." Few of us are so well acquainted with the Vedic literature as to be entitled to pass judgment on the degree of excellence of its spirit. I may then quote for our guidance the words of one who has made a study of the Hebrew Psalmists and of the Vedic poets, and who is liberal enough to allow goodness among the heathen and reverent enough to ascribe that goodness to God. After careful study Professor Cheyne has declared that "Vedic morality in general is superficial and ritualistic." Then it is exactly that which the Psalter morality is not. The Psalter lyrics were the songs in a service which was grand in ritual, and yet they never allowed forms to be represented as the equivalent of spirit. The Psalter lyrics never breathe contempt for ritual. They cry, "Bring to the altar"; they declare, "Then will I to God's altar go"; but they declare that ritual is nothing without spirit. Their song is sacrifice; but it is never sacrifice without spirit. It is ever

"Sacrifice, or burnt off'ring,  
Can to Thee no pleasure bring;  
But a spirit crushed for sin,  
Contrite, broken heart within,  
Thine accepted sacrifice,  
Thou, O God, wilt not despise."

Their ethics, then, excel the ethics of the Vedic singer. The morality of the Psalter is the morality of the prophet who proclaimed the excellence of doing justice and walking humbly. It is essentially the morality of the Christian teacher who declared that personal purity and wise and unselfish beneficence are pure and undefiled worship. While the morality of the Psalter is not ritualistic, it cannot be said to be superficial. Professor Cheyne realized that when he declared that "the moral law of the Psalmist is exceeding moral." But this is to say that if the Vedic poet is to be assigned a place by the side of David it must be with the recognition that he is not in the same class with David.

Shall I stay for a moment to compare the morality of the Semitic lyrics of Scripture with the morality of the classics of Greece and Rome? Whether one goes among the Greeks to Sappho or Pindar or Anacreon, or among the Romans to either Horace or Catullus, one finds the lyre of sweet sound and melodious movement, but one too often hears struck from that lyre a note which is never heard from the Hebrew instrument. They sing of the passions which are natural, but of the passions which human nature, by the hesitation of its speech concerning them, recognizes and treats as passions which need to be restrained rather than artificially stirred. They sing of those passions, moreover, in words which, while they charm the ear, become almost a serpent's poison to body and soul. They make that their common song concerning which commonly neither song nor speech, but silence, is best for man. These poets delight to sing of that to which the Hebrew would not give his song. The fact and charm of the Hebrew verse are its freedom from that which hurts the moral sense. It is as pure as it is sweet and melodious. In this it excels the lyre of Greece and Rome, the melody of which is far superior to its morality.

*Second.* I wish to present the superiority of the ethics of the Psalms to the ethics of the religious lyrics of modern times. The danger of a song is that it will be the expression of some senti-

ment with which little or no thought is joined. The misfortune of most religious lyrics has been that they have not escaped this danger. They have been the embodiment in musical language of passionate emotions, but they have missed being expressions of the entire spirit of man; they have been marked by "scant imagination and little thought." In this respect the Hebrew lyrics do not fail as most religious songs have failed. The Hebrew lyrics are steeped in thought, as well as vibrant with strong feeling. Emotion without thought and imagination was not considered in Judah equipment sufficient for a religious singer. The heart of the poet of Judah was hot within him. But this was the order: he mused, and then the fire burned within. With brain and heart aglow, the outburst from the tongue was a lyric of a quality unique among the lyrics of the world. From that burning heart comes the passionate intensity of the Hebrew lyric, in which it equals songs far more sentimental, but not more emotional, than itself. From that musing of a soul uplifted to look on life and see it from the mountain height comes the moral power which is the charm of the Hebrew songs. In this they surpass in ethics the ordinary religious lyrics of modern times.

*Third.* I wish now to show that there is no excellence of ethics beyond that which marks the ethics of the songs of Israel. They are not merely comparatively good—they are superlatively good. I shall take pleasure in allowing these poems to speak for themselves. What do they glorify? To what do they call? What do they excite in men and women? What are their ethics for individuals? What are their social ethics?

Let us consider the Psalter ethics as to individuals. When there is mention of the ethics of the Psalter as to individuals, it will be said by not a few that the poems of the Psalter are not individualistic, that they are the songs of a people, and that they are not to be understood as celebrating what is to be realized in the experience of individuals. I do not dispute that there is some truth in this assertion, truth which ought to be recognized.

The songs of Israel are the songs of a community. But they are not less truly the songs of the individuals constituting the community. The "I" and the "we" are both in the Psalter. Like the celestial eagle which Dante saw and heard in the heaven of righteous kings and rulers—which was one, though composed of a multitude of spirits, and which did "utter with its voice both 'I' and 'my,' when in conception it was 'we' and 'our,'" so the Psalter sings of all the people of Israel, and at the same time of every one of the people of Israel. Look on the Israelite of whom the Psalter sings. I hold that the ethics presented in this man are the best possible ethics for every man. They are the ethics of the man whom Jesus placed in the highest class when He recognized the distinction in excellence between the righteous and the good. The Psalter sings of the righteous man. The Psalter sings of the good man. The Psalter sings of the man, and gives glory to the man, who is both righteous and good. Listening to the words which the Israelite glorified in the Psalter speaks, the Psalter ethics of speech are found: Words should be true words, sincere words, kind words, helpful words, discriminating words. Looking upon the deeds which the Israelite glorified in the Psalter does, the Psalter ethics of conduct are found: deeds should be righteous, honorable, generous, beneficent, deeds which decrease evil and increase good for men and for mankind.

I wish particularly to make some presentation of the ethics of the Psalter as to a matter than which nothing else perhaps to-day so tests our ethical codes and practices,—ethics as to wealth. These poems do not belittle the value of material things. They do not decry the pursuit, the possession, the power of money, but they put the correct value on money and they set forth the ethical rules which should govern the obtaining of wealth and the employment of wealth. The idea that wealth is the chief or only thing which is worth man's while, and that money avails for everything, is strongly scouted. There is the song in which the singer sings of what money cannot buy or what wealth cannot do

for you or yours, the Forty-Ninth Psalm. That life has for us much which is better than wealth is set forth with rare beauty and power. The singer sings of that which is more to be desired than gold, yes, than much gold, though it has not been mixed at the mint with great alloy, but has been refined until a little stands for great value. That money is not to be made or saved by the breaking of a plighted word, that deceit and fraud and oppression of the poor and needy as methods by which to make great gains are vile methods, are sung strongly, and yet are so sung as not to seem strange themes of song. Yes, and in the light of passion for the right, which gives farthest insight into the truth as to life, the Psalter poet sees, and dares to sing, that the putting out of money in violation of the spirit and law of the national life is not righteous, however the law of supply and demand may seem to give it justification. These ways for increase of riches are grievous ways. So sings the Psalter. On the other hand, that money has worth, and that wealth is a good, are teachings presented with equal clearness and assurance.

The ethics of the Psalter as to wealth are strong and sane and sufficient. They set the standard for those to whom life has brought wealth, and who have wealth. And they do the same for those who have not wealth, and are on the way to gain or fail in the struggle to get wealth. They are ethics for those also who have not wealth, and for whom life opens no hope that they will get wealth.

Having considered the Psalter ethics for individuals as to conduct, I wish to present the Psalter ethics for individuals as to personal character. The Israelite who is glorified in the Psalter is a man whose word is truth, whose deeds are goodness, and the qualities of whose heart are as excellent as his words and works. The Psalter gives glory to him who is a man sincere, pure, and perfect in heart. The morality set forth is not a superficial morality, to be adopted because experience testifies that it is advantageous. The ethics of the Psalter are the ethics of the heart, as well as those of the tongue and hand, the ethics of inner being,



as well as of outward bearing, the ethics of character, as well as of conduct.

While the ethics of the Psalter as to the individual are seen to be the best possible, I wish to present also the social ethics of the Psalter and show them to be superlatively good. In this exhibit of the social ethics of the Psalter I shall present references to the Home and its members, and also to the State and its citizens. As lyrics of adoration and worship, there could not be expected to be much in the praises of Israel bearing on social institutions and relations. The more surprising, then, it is to find so much in the Psalter bearing on these.

Let us begin with the Psalter ethics as to the Home. There are not many of these songs which celebrate the Home. Only a few mention man and woman in the relation of family life. There is one marriage song in the Psalter, the Forty-Fifth Psalm. Let it be accepted as the beautiful allegory of the great spiritual mystery to be revealed when the cry shall be heard in heaven, "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready." Certainly, however, this its loftiest application will not be impaired when it is allowed to be a song of the loves of those who at the marriage-altar pledge life each for the other in the union ordained of God for man and woman. Will you who are familiar with the world's lyrics tell me of a lyric celebrating bride and bridegroom which approaches in purity of sentiment and in lofty ethical spirit this lyric of marriage in the lyrics of Israel?

There is another Psalter lyric of the Home. It might be called the lyric of the good man's home. I refer to the One Hundred and Twenty-Eighth Psalm. It sings of "thy house," "thy wife," "thy table," "thy children." It presents a picture of home beautiful and attractive. Happy is he who can look on the picture and feel that it is his home to which the singer has gone and made of it a song. From Psalter references in lines to the home I wish to make at least one quotation: "The voice of joy and saving health is in the good man's dwelling-place." It gives

two features of a good home: wholesomeness and happiness. Saving health is found there; the wholesomeness which saves a man from many a danger and temptation, which saves the young men and women who gather within it, and which sends them out so morally healthy that sin finds in them no place to do its fatal work. Happiness is found there, the happiness which makes it no mockery to speak of that abode where fullness of pleasure abides forever as the Father's house, the home.

The words quoted may bring to the mind many other Psalter words as to family and home. From them all can be framed the Psalter ethics as to home. And according to the Psalter ethics, family life should be monogamous, and purely monogamous. Family life should be marked by the coheadship in the home of husband and wife. Homes should be separated institutions, with possibilities for every household of a complete and independent family life. Homes should be composed of husband and wife, not alone, but as father and mother, surrounded by children esteemed as the heritage of God. The temper of the home should be peace and unity. The spirit of the home should be helpfulness and happiness. The atmosphere of the home should be wholesomeness, even to the extent of being saving. The ethics of the Psalter are that homes should be founded on love, maintained in love, and the ends for which they are ordained realized through love.

I wish to present next the Psalter ethics as to the State and its citizens.

By many positive precepts the Psalter unfolds its ethical teaching as to that which is fitting civic spirit. Social recognition is never to be in disregard of character: "The vile are not to be exalted." Graft should be absent; the citizen should be a "man of clean hands." Courts should be courts of equity; before the judiciary should never be heard the lament, "How long will ye judge unjustly?" The Psalter ethics, then, are: Peace and plenty and power should characterize a land; its on-going life should be marked by the spirit which assures that by orderly

processes, and not revolutionary, "the arms of the wicked shall be broken," and that in the strength of righteousness shall the State pursue its way and find its exaltation.

When one thinks of the presentation which the Psalter makes of ethics, he is almost persuaded that the songs were written to be a manual of right living. What Ruskin said of the first half of the Psalter may be applied to it as a whole: "The Psalter sums up all the wisdom of society and the individual." The Jews well understood the Book. They grasped it more fully than do most of us modern Christians. They called it "The Praises of Israel," but they called it also "a Second Pentateuch." They were right. This song-book of the people of God is a veritable "Torah of life."

In order to a complete presentation of the ethical spirit of the Psalter consideration should be given those odes which are understood by many to breathe the spirit of revenge. At present this must suffice: The songs of the Psalter are woefully inconsistent with themselves if the so-called Imprecatory Psalms are to be regarded as non-Christian and malicious utterances of personal or church hatred. We may be thankful that we have the prayer of Stephen when we have the One Hundred and Ninth Psalm, but another essayist will show that in both the prayer and the song we have the same mind, the mind of the Christ. The prayer and the song were alike indited by the Spirit of Christ.

Having now allowed the Psalter to make its own exhibition of the ethics which mark it, I may briefly point out some characteristics of the ethical system which runs through its pages:

I. Note the grounds of ethics according to the Psalter. In the schools of science ethics is studied as a branch of psychology. This is proper. The conception of man determines the conception of what is fitting on the part of man. Ethical systems are then in the schools developed from the instincts of man, from the reason of man, from the relations of man to nature, to his fellows, or to any higher Being to Whom relation is conceded.

Ethical systems vary as man is regarded as a being whose relations are solely with the earth and with those on the earth, or also with One Who is above the earth. They must so vary. Psychology does determine ethics. The Psalter ethics, while not presented formally as a science, are truly scientific. They are based on the Psalter psychology, which regards man as a being who was created by God in His image, a being whose instincts, reason, and moral nature are of Him from Whom he came, and in Whose likeness he was made. It finds the explanation of man in God. Its ethics are then the ethics of character and conduct, which recognize man as in origin, nature, and obligation related to God. Human ethics are God-based ethics. Man being God-created and God-related is God-obligated.

II. The ethics of the Psalter are a universal ethics. The Psalter exempts no rational being from the obligation of moral law. The Psalter excuses no rational being from the performance of the obligation of moral law. The Psalter excludes no rational being from the attainment of that excellence to which moral law summons. It greatly excels in this respect the ethics of a world-famed teacher of morals whose admirers have thought him worthy to be canonized and called "the divine Plato." In the judgment of Plato virtue required right insight into life. So far he was correct. He and the Psalter agree. But the knowledge which is required for this insight into life could not in the judgment of Plato be mastered by slaves. Virtue in his thought became a royal road, open only to a few. In this he and the Psalter disagree. Plato is wrong. The Psalter is right. The Psalter stands in opposition to all forms of modern Platonism which regard virtue as a cult only for some. There is yet a Platonism which is based on thinking more highly of self than is fitting and of not esteeming others rightly. The disposition to exempt any races, whether they be yellow or black, or any classes whose inheritances drag heavily down the way of moral wrong, finds neither support nor encouragement in the Psalter. The disposition to declare any race or any class or any person

incapacitated for moral achievement is not in accord with the Psalter ethics. In the Psalter the prototype of all goodness is He Who has made all of us, and Who made us in His image, so that we find within ourselves the law which the higher self should lay on self.

III. Another feature of the Psalter ethics is the insistence that ethics are a matter of supreme importance. The common consciousness that the world-life is governed by moral laws is more than sustained. The Psalter ethics affirm that the future turns on regard or disregard of the distinction between goodness and badness, right and wrong. The future is with him who doeth righteousness. The wicked may spread himself like a green bay tree, but he shall pass away. The upright alone will abide. Success or failure, life or death, for men turns on the ethical spirit and quality of life.

So I present the superlative excellence of the Psalter ethics and the superlative excellence of the Psalter in its emphasis on morals. Should not the fact commend the "Songs of Israel" to those to whom morality is goodness and to those who desire religion to unfold itself in goodness of life and being? Should not this fact commend the Psalter as a book particularly adapted to a time when the ethical obtrudes in every department of human life, when even for Christianity the problems are, perhaps to an extent they never were before, the problems of applied Christianity? What better for our life and time than the Songs of the Psalter, steeped in thought and vibrant with strong passion for righteousness? Sing them, then, until souls thrill with their spirit. Sing them into life until the breath they breathe becomes the breath of the life of men.

## THE IMPRECATORY PSALMS

BY THE REV. J. H. WEBSTER, PHILADELPHIA, PA.

**T**HE term "imprecatory" is applied to certain Psalms and other portions of Scripture that invoke or threaten evil upon the wicked, or contain solemn warnings of the inevitable punishment of sin. Fault has been found with the use of the term "imprecatory," because it does not apply, strictly speaking, to all the passages under consideration, since some of them are plainly prophetic, others comminatory, and others merely monitory. It must be admitted, however, that many of these passages do contain imprecations and utter solemn and awful curses against the incorrigible sinner. We might, perhaps, with more propriety term these Psalms the "Justice" Psalms, but we accept the terms commonly applied to them, confident that no matter how severely they may be characterized there is abundant justification for their presence in the Word of God.

The problem is to find some satisfactory solution for the spirit of apparent harshness and severity expressed—some explanation that will answer the objections and allay the misgivings of even devout Christians as to the propriety of using them, either in reading or singing, in the worship of God. It is not strange that, especially in modern times, these Psalms have been subjected in many instances to unmeasured condemnation as the fruit of "a savage spirit," or as expressions of personal vindictiveness, or as the hasty utterances of men while their souls were "storm-tossed by passion," or as "inconsistent with the spirit and teachings of the New Testament." Were we to accept these grave charges as true, no course would be open to us save to expunge these odes at once and forever from the Word of God.

No explanation has thus far been proposed that is universally

satisfactory, and doubtless none ever will be, nor is it the aim of this paper to attempt anything so ambitious. It is proposed, however, to examine some of the more important solutions offered from time to time in the discussion of this subject and to draw some lessons from them that will serve to aid us in forming our opinion, and help confirm our confidence in the divine declaration that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." It has been urged from the time of Augustine down that the imprecations do not express "a desire for the sinner's doom, but merely predict it." This view is based on the fact that the Hebrew has no proper tense to express the optative. But both grammar and context require the optative or imperative rendering in so many cases that this view has been practically abandoned, and properly so, since it savors too much of evasion, and after all, as Bishop Alexander states, only pushes the difficulty a step further back.

Others maintain that the passages in question are to be understood in a spiritual sense, "that the reference to individuals is not real, but imaginary, assumed for the time being, and for an ultimate purpose wholly different from what lies on the face of them; that is, we are to apply these various maledictions to our spiritual foes, imprecating on them the terrible calamities apparently, but only apparently, intended for the personal enemies of the sacred writers." That these Psalms may be used frequently, and with great propriety at times, against our spiritual enemies no one, we believe, will deny, but as an explanation of the question at issue this view utterly fails. Saul, Doeg, Ahithophel, and others of like character were very much and very banefully in evidence in the flesh.

Another and somewhat popular explanation regards the imprecations as expressions of personal vindictiveness. Since most of them are ascribed to David, this view weighs heavily against his character as a man, a ruler, and a child of God. The re-

corded facts of David's life compel us to refuse it, even had we no other evidence. Forced into active participation in public affairs from his struggle with Goliath until his death as king of all Israel, compelled to war at various times for his life, his kingdom, and the cause of God, frequently beset by foes among his own countrymen, plotted against by his own familiar friend, made to feel the bitterness of filial ingratitude and rebellion, subjected to the fiercest assaults of reproach and slander because he was the foremost representative of God and all that was noblest in the human aspirations of his day, to say nothing of the fierce personal temptations and trials besetting men in power—a careful study of his conduct in all these trying vicissitudes of life leaves us astonished at his moderation and singular freedom from the spirit of personal revenge in his dealings with his foes. His magnanimous treatment of Saul when that malignant king was in his power, his resignation and forbearance under the curses of Shimei, his patience with the turbulent Joab, his generosity to Abner, and his long-suffering and pathetic love for the ingrate Absalom,—all prove that whatever faults may be pointed out in the character of this great man, personal vindictiveness was not one of them. Were these Imprecatory Psalms the language of mere personal animosity to his foes they would mark David as one of the most savage, profane, and cruel characters known to history, and not only so, but as likewise being destitute of the slightest vestige of prudence or care for his own reputation; for the most profane and cruel among men value the good opinion of their fellows sufficiently to deter them from writing down their own weakness or wickedness. But in this matter the testimony of God is greater: "I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after Mine own heart, who shall fulfill all My will." It is needless to say that the divine encomium would not be pronounced upon the character of a man who was dominated by that spirit of carnal revenge which is condemned as explicitly and forcibly in the Old Testament as in the New. Moreover, we have explicit statements of the



motives governing the authors of these Psalms. Says Hibbard, "They constantly professed their motive and object in praying for the destruction of their enemies to be the protection of the righteous, the honor of God, and the accomplishment of His gracious purposes in the earth." Tholuck in his Commentary on the Psalms uses similar language. Take Ps. xxxv. as an example. Read the descriptions it contains of the malice and persistence with which the foes of the Psalmist "sought after his life." They were evidently opposing him and seeking his destruction when he was engaged in some cause of great public concern involving the truth of God and the public welfare. He prays for the confusion of his enemies in order that "the Lord may be magnified." That this prayer was unmixed with any spirit of personal revenge is evident from the noble words: "But, as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into my own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother." Statements of similar motives abound, and in no case can an impure or impious one be designated as the source of these so-called vindictive or Imprecatory Psalms.

But the fact that David spoke by divine inspiration ought to settle for the Christian at least this charge of personal vindictiveness. Let us hear his own testimony to this effect as found in 2 Sam. xxiii. 1, 2 (and the divine estimate of his character justifies us in admitting him as a competent and trustworthy witness): "David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue." The testimony of our Lord is to the same effect. In three Gospels He quotes from Ps. cx., ascribing it to David. In two of these places He asserts that David spake under divine direction: "How then doth David in the Spirit call Him Lord" (Matt. xxii. 43 R. V.)? "David himself said in the Holy Spirit, the Lord said unto my Lord,

Sit Thou on My right hand, Till I make Thine enemies the footstool of Thy feet" (Mark xii. 36. R. V.). This Psalm, too, is classed among the imprecatory. Peter asserts (Acts i. 16) that the Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of David concerning Judas, and quotes from Pss. lxxix. and cix., which are preëminently imprecatory. To the objection interposed that Peter used this language before Pentecost, and therefore did not speak by inspiration, it may be replied that his language after that event indicates no change in his opinion of David's inspiration. In Acts iv. 25 the Second Psalm is ascribed to God: "Who by the mouth of Thy servant David hast said, Why do the heathen rage?" The writer of the Hebrews quotes from Ps. xcvi., and asserts that the Holy Spirit speaks through David. To the statements often made that this is all *ex parte* evidence in favor of inspiration, that even Christ Himself as a man was so limited in His attainments as to frequently err in His allusions to Old Testament writers and writings, or that He spoke with indulgence to popular errors, we may say, first of all, that the burden of proof rests on those who urge such views, and, second, that He "Who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh" was also "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. i. 3, 4). If this be admitted (and who can reasonably doubt the fact of the resurrection), then the divinity of our Lord is proved. He is the Son of God, invested with all the attributes of divinity, among them infinite wisdom. Therefore, His testimony on all matters, even the inspiration of the Imprecatory Psalms, must be accepted as decisive. To charge the writers of them with an un-Christian spirit aims a blow not merely against the character of David, but against the spotless character and infinite perfection of Him by Whose authority, and under the influence of Whose Holy Spirit, David wrote.

Another explanation prevalent at present, and somewhat similar to the foregoing, declares that the imprecations of the Psalms "are to be accounted for by the spirit of the old dispensation,

not to be defended by that of the new." They are, according to this view, expressions of the "un-Christian and un-spiritual element" of the inferior and defective Jewish economy. This view is held with various modifications, not only by those openly hostile to the Old Testament, but also by its professed friends. The latter, "deeming it vain to justify the imprecations, endeavor to save the divine authority of the Bible by insisting on the inferiority of the Jewish economy." They allude to the new commandment of Christ as if it were unknown to the Old Testament saints. Space does not permit a detailed discussion of the relative values of the two dispensations, nor is it necessary in order to form a judgment on this view. Suffice it to say, in the words of Dr. Pressly: "It is an error of very pernicious tendency to represent one part of the Word of God as contradictory to another. It is doubtless true that the mind of God is more fully and clearly revealed in one part of His Word than in another. But this is a very different thing from saying that one part of the Word of God tends to fill the mind with passions which are contrary to the new commandment of loving our enemies. The duty of loving our enemies is enforced by a new example and new motives, and our obligation to perform this duty is set forth in a new light under the gospel; but the duty itself is not new, nor is it by any means peculiar to the gospel. The Scribes and Pharisees, who made void the law of God by their traditions, did indeed teach the abhorrent doctrine, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy.' But there is no such doctrine countenanced in any part of the Word of God. The law of God is, like Himself, unchangeable, and it always required that we should love our enemies. 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself' is a summary of what it requires in so far as our duty to our fellow-man is concerned. All this was required under the legal dispensation, and nothing more than this is required under the gospel."

Nor are the teachings of the New Testament regarding incorrigible sinners any less severe than those of the Old. Wit-

ness the language of John the Baptist to the Pharisees and Sadducees: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" The Apostle Peter denounced judgment on Ananias and Sapphira, and the event proved the judgment to be of God. "Thy money perish with thee" were his words to Simon. The Apostle Paul in writing to the Galatians invokes a curse on those who might preach any other gospel than he had preached unto them. He commands the Corinthian Church, in the case of the incestuous person, "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to deliver the offender unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh." So with Hymenæus and Alexander. He prays that the Lord would "reward Alexander the copper-smith according to his works." He indicts Elymas as a "child of the devil" and an "enemy of all righteousness," announcing the blindness that immediately falls upon him. The writer of the Hebrews argues that if the fuller light and greater privileges of the New Testament be neglected, the judgments of God will increase upon sinners with proportionate intensity (Heb. x. 26-31). Our Lord Himself utters solemn and awful denunciations against the avaricious and hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees. In His parables He teaches in language that cannot be mistaken the guilt and everlasting punishment of the wicked. He predicts a doom more fearful than that of Tyre, Sidon, or Sodom on the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Turn to that remarkable passage in the Revelation, "where the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held" are represented as praying for vengeance: "They cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" This is the prayer of the "spirits of just men made perfect," dwelling in the presence of the living God; yet they pray for vengeance, nor is their prayer denied, but only delayed a little.

Surely these passages prove that the spirit and attitude of both dispensations towards sin are the same. If there be any

difference, the candid reader must confess that the expressions of God's wrath against sin contained in the New Testament are more explicit, more solemn, more terrible, than those of the Old. The revelation of the "wrath of the Lamb" finds its fullest development and expression in the closing pages of the New Testament. The unchangeable God is the author of both dispensations; therefore we find in them identity of spirit and teaching. Both express His holy detestation of sin and determination to punish it. Both teach the doctrine of atonement for sin. And what is the doctrine of atonement if it is not a most emphatic declaration of God's purpose to punish sin? In view of these facts, we cannot accept an explanation that is so utterly at variance with the truth.

In the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for 1844 Professor B. B. Edwards advanced an explanation of this question, which was adopted by Kitto, and favorably reviewed in the later editions of Horne's *Introduction*. Its essential features are as follows: The imprecations are to be explained by "an original elementary principle of our nature that fills us with resentment against atrocious crimes, imperatively demands their punishment, and is not quieted until the welfare of the criminal has been disturbed in some proportion to the injury he has inflicted on society. A primary element of this principle is indignation, a spontaneous feeling of anger towards the evildoer, not preventable and prior to all deliberation. It is outraged nature that will have vent. Another element of it is compassion towards the injured party. We have an instinctive pity for weakness crushed in the dust, for innocence betrayed and violated. Another and chief element is the sense of justice. When a crime of extraordinary atrocity goes unpunished, we feel that justice has been defrauded of its dues. We are indignant that such a wrong should remain unredressed. While the crime remains unatoned, we have a feeling, not only of insecurity, but that justice has been violated. Public order has been disturbed, a shock given to the common sense of rectitude. This feeling is not momentary, as the indignant or com-

passionate feeling may be. It grows stronger with the lapse of time. Reflection adds to its intensity. Deliberation shows its reasonableness. When a great outrage has been perpetrated, nothing will calm the perturbation of our moral nature but the infliction of a penalty. A voice within us calls imperatively for reparation, and what we crave by an irrepressible instinct of our moral nature, may we not, on fit occasions, express in language?

In all ages and nations and amid all classes of society this universal principle has manifested itself. Whenever the voice of a brother's blood has cried from the ground, it has found an answering echo in every bosom. Nor is this principle attended with any private malice. The absorbing emotion is for the good of society. We have the persuasion that if the criminal escape, the bonds that hold men together will be weakened, if they be not destroyed. The utterance of this moral feeling is the utterance of humanity within us, an expression of sympathy with the well-being of the race. The connection of this principle with the imprecations of the Psalms and other portions of Scripture is obvious. If it does not account for all, it still lies at the foundation of a large portion of them. In other words, these passages are justified by a primary and innocent feeling of our nature."

Will not this principle explain the famous One Hundred and Thirty-Seventh Psalm? Is not the resentment that glows in its closing verses not only proper and natural, but just? Hengstenberg says that "the Psalmist only prays for that which the Lord had often declared was to be done, what lay grounded on the eternal laws of recompensing divine righteousness." Calvin says, "The prophet here does not rashly break out into curses and threats, but only acts as a divine herald to confirm former predictions." Isaiah's prediction concerning Babylon states that "their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes." The part played by the soldiers of Edom in the sack and destruction of Jerusalem is described and condemned in the prophecies

of Ezekiel and Obadiah. God's purpose to visit Edom with condign punishment is clearly declared: "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off forever." Serving in the army of Nebuchadnezzar, these fierce warriors showed no mercy to Jerusalem. Their cry was: "Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation thereof." The Jewish mothers saw their little ones dashed against the stones by these bloodthirsty enemies, who delighted in the slaughter. Was it any wonder that the request of their captors to sing the songs of Zion recalled that awful day of blood and carnage when their beloved city fell, that it emphasized the wretchedness of the present? Their city was in ruins, their temple destroyed, the Church of God in exile, and Babylon, the enemy of their nation and God, triumphant. Was it any wonder that a spirit of just resentment should fill their hearts and find expression in song? The singer voices the spirit of Jewish patriotism, as well as the sentiment of the Jewish Church. Was it any wonder, and was it any wrong, that they sang in this song of praise what God had already declared in prophecy to be His will? The Psalm contains a prediction of the utter destruction of Babylon, the oppressor of the Church, in figurative language borrowed from the cruel customs of savage warfare. To say that it indorses and rejoices in the destruction of innocent children is to say what it does not say. It simply declares that the coming destroyers of Babylon would rejoice in the work of destroying her, even as she had rejoiced in the destruction of Jerusalem. In short, this Psalm predicts the certain coming and completeness of divine retribution.

While we believe that Dr. Edwards' view is satisfactory so far as it goes, and that the imprecations rise from a sense of justice, indignation against wrong-doing, and compassion for the wronged, we are, however, persuaded that they are not merely expressions of this sense of justice as developed in the hearts of the men who penned them. David, for example, was a type and spokesman of Christ, and the Imprecatory Psalms are ex-

pressions of the infinite justice of the God-Man, of His indignation against wrong-doing, of His compassion for the wronged. They reveal the feelings of His heart and the sentiments of His mind regarding sin. They represent His attitude as the King and Judge of His Church. It is when we seek the key of each Book of Scripture in its relation to the person or character or work of Christ that we have most success in finding its significance. This is preëminently true of the Book of Psalms. Other Books may dwell more on His history or other topics relating to Him, but this Book reveals His heart, His love for His Church and people, His hatred of sin. Here we have the deep intensity of His emotions in His struggle against all His and our enemies, here the words that are so frequently ascribed or applied to Him in the New Testament, here the words describing His betrayal by Judas, and the agonies of His death on the cross, here the language in which He dismissed His spirit. It has been well said that "Christ Himself is the best key to the Psalms." It does not surprise us to learn that the Apostolic Church regarded them, even the imprecatory, as the voice of Christ, or that Augustine and Luther referred the imprecatory ones exclusively to Him. Certainly the passages from them quoted by Christ and His Apostles, whose profound insight into the Scriptures few will be disposed to deny, and applied to Himself frequently where we would least expect such application, convince us that Christ is in these Psalms much more fully than many are disposed to admit.

In his "Witness of the Psalms to Christ" Bishop Alexander says: "If we believe these imprecatory passages are divine, then they belong to Him in Whose hands are life and death; the load is lifted off and laid upon One Whose love is strong enough to bear the burden of their reproach." And speaking of the sterner side of Christ's character displayed in them, the same writer justly and beautifully says: "They are the correlatives of the doctrine of retribution. They are spoken, if we conceive rightly, by One Who expresses, as far as human language can, the doom



which is the sure decree of the Governor of the World. Unless it is wrong and incredible that God should punish terribly, it is not wrong or incredible that His Son should give warning of it in the most vivid and impressive way. . . . He is not like an accuser flushed with natural indignation. He is the Priest or Herald standing upon the stairs of an altar draped in black, and pealing out to an assembled world the interdict of God. He is the Son of Man, still, as in the days of His flesh, 'looking round,' not indeed on a narrow circle in Galilee, but upon a vast throng of the enemies of God, 'being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.' He is as the Judge, who puts on the black cap and passes sorrowfully, it may be, the judgment of a law with which, in spite of that sorrow, his own reason and conscience are in perfect harmony." Time does not permit us to show how this view of the Imprecatory Psalms is confirmed by quotations from them in the New Testament applied to Christ. Nor is it necessary to do more than allude to the well-known quotations from Pss. xxxv., lxix., cix., and cx. The principle advocated is that these "vindictive" Psalms voice the feelings and sentiments that animate Christ in His struggle with the incorrigible enemies of His Kingdom and His determination to punish them. Working on this principle, we feel sure that Psalm-singers will have no reason to complain that there is anything in this great autobiography of Him Who is "the way, the truth, and the life" unsuited either to their sermons or experience.

Occasions abundantly justifying their proper use are to be found in the history of the Church. There have been times when the children of God have been compelled to fight for their own lives and the cause of truth with carnal weapons. Their bravery on many a hard-fought field is enshrined in the memory of the Church. When the Spanish Armada swept down on the shores of England, pious and patriotic hearts united in that mighty war-song, "Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered, let them also that hate Him flee before Him." They nerved the heart of an English David and his stern Ironsides to accomplish a work

for God and humanity that required men of iron to do. They swept to victory with their spirits strengthened for the shock of battle by these songs. These "Justice" Psalms were needed and used, and used aright, by the persecuted Waldenses, the hunted Camisards, the oppressed Covenanters. Men of every shade of religious belief (the fact is notorious) turned to them in the days of our Civil War. When the awful story of the Armenian atrocities filled the civilized world with horror, righteous indignation sought as its fittest vehicle of expression these Psalms. And can we not find in them passages that we can use with perfect propriety and a spirit of genuine piety to describe the lawless raids of the municipal freebooters of the twentieth century?

It must be obvious to the attentive student of the Imprecatory Psalms that their effect is to restrain us from sin, to make us love and value justice, to lead us to commit vengeance into the hands of the Lord, thus strongly deterring us from private and personal revenge, and to show us that God is to be praised for His justice as well as His mercy. History itself teaches us that civilization progresses most rapidly when justice and mercy go hand in hand in the conduct of affairs, as they do in the Scriptures of God.

When all is quiet and peaceful the Church may not feel very often or keenly the need of these so-called imprecatory songs, and may study them in a merely academic way; but when the shock of a great battle for the truth and with implacable enemies is upon her, when the storms of persecution rage, when her foes beset her round on every side, when earthly hope vanishes and her faith is tried as by fire, then she turns to these Psalms. They may have been stumbling blocks to her faith in her prosperity, but they prove stepping-stones heavenward in her adversity, because in them the Judge of all the earth assures her of the ultimate destruction of her enemies and the complete and everlasting triumph of her cause.

## THE IMPRECATORY PSALMS

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SO long as Ebal and Gerizim stand as mountains on the earth, so long will the curse of God plague the wicked in this world, and His blessing benefit the righteous. So long as Ebal and Gerizim tower heavenward and mark the path of the ancient Church in the wilderness, so long will the Church sing in God-given song of "mercy and judgment." The matter, spirit, and purpose of God-given song now claim our attention. The Book of Psalms is the songs of God. It is by locality and importance the very heart of the Scriptures. Kitto says, "The Book of God is like the perfectly organized human frame in this, that no part necessary to vital function is wanting; while nothing is redundant, there is no part that has not an essential and important use." He continues, "What, for instance, would the Bible be without the Book of Psalms? It seems, at first view, a very separable portion, a part that might be taken out without destroying the symmetry of the whole. But it is not so. Should the experiment be made, it would be seen that a man with his arm shorn off at the shoulder-blade is less maimed and disfigured than would be the Bible deficient of this book of groans, and sighs, and tears, and smiles, and triumphant shouts. In fact, a Bible without a Book of Psalms is simply an inconceivable thing. It is not only a part of our rich heritage, but of ourselves. It is our voice. It is the voice in which the Church in all her members, in all her sects, countries, and climes, has for three thousand years poured forth her soul before God."

Now we hold that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," a plenary inspiration. As, therefore, the Book of Psalms is an essential part of Scripture, it must be inspired in every part, and as a whole, by the Holy Spirit of God. The Imprecatory

tory Psalms, being a part of the whole Book of Psalms, have the distinction of being the very mind of the Spirit, and of being penned under His guidance and sanction. However, notwithstanding this fact, they have been subjected to frequent, terrible, and profane criticism by many, and in many quarters. These Psalms have been given a bad name, and this has had a baneful and widespread influence. It has not been preëminent piety that has prompted this, though adverse critics have posed as having a morality and Christ-likeness superior to that manifested in these Psalms, but rather presumption and pride, coupled with a sickly sentimentalism, that pretends to pity the evildoer while it undervalues the enormity of sin. These Psalms have been singled out and given an unenviable prominence by designating them as Imprecatory, Cursing, Condemning Psalms. Placed on this pedestal, the thoughtless, and those who would not otherwise have criticised, have wagged their heads at them, and shot out their lips, and in refusing them have failed of the moral tonic and strength that these Psalms are calculated to afford. This much can be safely said: men lose sight of the enormity of sin before they utter their mawkish sentiments against these Psalms, which they have separated, condemned, and made unnecessarily offensive to many.

The champion charge against these Psalms, and that made by a man of great profession, and a recognized leader in the Church, is that they are so full of cursing that a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ can hardly use them. Our own Dr. Grier says: "This charge is not really against the Psalms, but their author. Who is he? Not merely David. He is not wholly their author. They are not responsible for themselves, but the Holy Spirit is. The objector may feel comfortable in his position, but it is not flattering to his piety." In the interests of truth, and for the sake of fairness, we must concede that there are terrible utterances in these Psalms. There are startling expressions of wrath and imprecations against the evildoer; for it must be noted that wickedness is not dealt with in the abstract: evil-doing is insepa-

nable from the evildoer. Imprecations abound in the Book of Psalms, but the Psalms particularly marked by these are the Fifty-Fifth, the Fifty-Ninth, Sixty-Ninth, Seventy-Ninth, One Hundred and Ninth, and the One Hundred and Thirty-Seventh. These Psalms have been under an awful fire of criticism, some even going so far in revising and compiling the Psalter for modern day use as to drop the Imprecatory Psalms from their collection. What a burden of responsibility they have assumed!

That the Psalms have been under a heavy fire of criticism is a fact familiar to any one who has given attention to the trend of religious thought. But to show the injustice of adverse and bitter criticism, and to do honor to the Holy Spirit, we say that the Psalms are altogether pitched on the key of Bible morality. They express the mind of the Holy Spirit, which is always the same, and they express the emotions of the human soul that is in sympathy with the law and purpose of the righteous and holy God. Any argument that wars against the divine inspiration of the Psalms that we are considering wars against the whole Book of Psalms. They stand or fall together. The believer in inspiration will not therefore be guilty of the irreverence and profanity of flouting these Psalms; for that which is said and done against them is said and done against the Holy Spirit; and who will dare to risk having such a charge lodged against him?

Again, David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, the man after God's own heart, is preëminently the Psalmist of the Church. The Psalms are called "The Psalms of David." When the Psalms are quoted in the New Testament, David is quoted. He was not a man of vindictive spirit. He did not set himself to redress personal wrongs. We always think of him as a man of a sweet spirit, sympathetic, forgiving. The setting and surrounding of the most imprecatory expressions in the Psalter seem to be the Spirit's warning that these expressions must not be construed as the product of a vindictive spirit in David. Mild and intensely spiritual sentiments are often their setting,

so that these imprecatory expressions spring as thorns among the sweet flowers of God. Time does not permit me to speak of the gracious manner in which David dealt with Saul, his greatest and most implacable enemy. Saul's life was in his hand again and again, but the remotest thing from David's thought or desire was to harm even a hair of Saul's head. What manner of man was he who could couple the name of Saul with that of Jonathan in his immortal eulogy, and say of them together: "They were beautiful and pleasant in their lives"? The toleration which he showed to Shimei, who cursed him, cast stones at him, and called him a bloody man, in the day when he was driven out of Jerusalem, shows that he was not a man to harbor revenge. In all fairness it must be said that these Imprecatory Psalms are not an expression of personal vindictiveness against individual enemies, nor a call for judgment upon personal foes. No application of these Psalms to any of David's personal enemies has been successfully made.

Furthermore, it is urged by those who boast themselves of a spirit superior to the spirit manifested in these Imprecatory Psalms that these Psalms are diametrically opposed to the teachings of the New Testament, that they belong to a stern, harsh, and semi-barbarous age, that they are antiquated, if not entirely obsolete, so far as their spirit and teaching are concerned. But is there anything more terrible in the Old Testament, and particularly in the Psalms in question, than much that may be found in the New Testament? John the Baptist, the rough and rugged man of the desert, but the man God-sent, and of wholly sanctified spirit, addressed some of those who waited on his ministry in terms that no modern congregation would tolerate for a moment. The "woes" that Jesus Christ Himself pronounced upon hypocrites are not surpassed by any language of prophet or Psalmist. In the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, that chapter of multiplied woes, the Master concludes by saying, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Also, concerning their doomed city He

said, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." The eminent Christian spirit of Paul cannot be questioned, and yet he proved by his conduct and words that righteous indignation has its sphere, and that there are occasions when it is perfectly proper. When directed against wickedness it has a wholesome, deterrent effect. "Be ye angry and sin not" is a divine injunction which is too much slighted in this age of invertebrate profession and of peace at any cost. When Paul was cruelly and shamefully smitten by the direction of the high priest, he replied, while yet smarting under the blow: "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall." Being wronged by one who should have sustained him, he wrote: "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works." Just before closing his First Epistle to the Corinthians with his usual benediction of grace, he writes: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema." Peter said to Simon the sorcerer, "Thy money perish with thee." In Rev. vi. 9, 10 we read: "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" This was the cry of souls who had passed out of the Church on earth into a holy and perfect state. Their cry to Him to Whom vengeance belongeth was a cry for speedy justice, and there is no evidence that the cry, or the spirit of the cry, was rebuked. Can you find any awful parallel to the description of the ruin of spiritual Babylon as given by the seer of the Apocalypse in the eighteenth chapter of the Revelation? And in the following chapter we read of heavenly hallelujahs, because God had judged the great harlot, and had avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. Also when the blood of the persecutors of the saints was made to flow a crimson river, "the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters, and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, Which art,

and wast, and shalt be, because Thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy" (Rev. xvi. 4, 6). Because of what has been said on this point—and there is much more of the same tenor that might be said—are we not justified in concluding that the Psalms and all the Old Testament are one in spirit with the New, as they both proceed from the same Holy Spirit, Whose mind and morality are eternally the same?

But, further, in justification of what has already been said, should not those who are in covenant with God, and have been made partakers of the divine nature, maintain just such an attitude toward evil as these Imprecatory Psalms express? "Ye who love the Lord, hate evil," is a command that we are bound to obey. It has been said that the good man must be a strong hater as well as an ardent lover. He must hate the things that God hates, as well as love the things that God loves. Hibbard, commenting on Psalm cix., says, "The eternal principle of justice in the moral government of God has settled it that the wicked must be punished, and their devices brought to naught. If the righteous are ever vindicated, innocency ever protected, the highest happiness of the universe ever secured, or the authority of the moral government sustained, it must be so. The principle on which the judgment against the wicked will proceed is expressed in the words, 'According to their works,' 'With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.' Prayer for the overthrow of wicked men, and the defeat of their wicked devices, becomes sinful only when it proceeds from feelings of private ill-will or revenge, or from sinful desire of gain or success by that means. But it is just, and in sympathy with all goodness and virtue, when it proceeds from a love of justice, a desire for the protection of the innocent, a regard for the peace and protection of society, for the vindication of the righteous, the encouragement of faith and virtue, the diffusion of truth, the extension of righteousness, the honor of God, and the establish-



ment of His kingdom in the earth. If our enemies are the enemies of God, our cause His cause, our success the success of truth and righteousness, the overthrow of our enemies necessary in order to remove the obstructions to the progress and triumph of truth and virtue, then prayer for their overthrow arises not from hatred to individual men, but from love for the honor of God and the well-being of society."

Also, is it not evidence of Christ-likeness to be satisfied, yea, glad, at the ruin of Jezebel, Herod, and all their incorrigible class; to feel that the horrors of the French Revolution were justly due a nation that rose in awful treachery against the saints of God, because they were the saints of God; to rejoice when in the purpose and providence of God Bloody McKenzie and Graham of Claverhouse are arrested by death in its most terrible forms, and their persecutions made to cease? If my guest is murdered under my roof by some desperado at midnight, I will never be satisfied until justice is dealt out to him. Not my vindictiveness, but my sense of justice, will prompt me to seek his arrest, and rejoice when the law lays its heavy hand upon him. When men ignore law and outrage righteousness, are we stepping beyond the limit when we earnestly desire their overthrow and pray for it? This is the spirit of the Imprecatory Psalms, of all the Old Testament and of the New, and it is the spirit manifested ever more intensely as men get near to God in thought and life.

Many suggestions have been made in attempting to remove the difficulties which these sorely criticised Psalms present to certain types of mind. Some say that the seemingly vindictive spirit of these Psalms is to be accounted for in this way, namely, that they took their coloring from the atmosphere of the age in which they were written. In other words, they are simply in keeping with the spirit of the age in which the Psalmist lived, and, therefore, they are unfit to be sung in praise in the New Testament Church. But this suggestion is of no weight. In fact, it logically wars against the inspiration and divine author-

ship of the entire Book of Psalms. The evils which these Psalms deprecate existed in David's day, even as they exist now; so that we may conclude that the imprecations are not to be accounted for as merely consonant with Oriental forms of expression, or as due to the spirit of the age, but because sinners were deserving of the very imprecations that the Spirit used in these Psalms by the Psalmist, and because the Spirit could make these imprecations no less or lighter.

Again, it has been suggested that the Imprecatory Psalms are predictive rather than imperative. Those who put forth this suggestion point to the fact that the Sixty-Ninth Psalm is quoted in the New Testament as having its fulfilment in the earthly life and experience of our Lord, that portions of the Sixty-Ninth and the One Hundred and Ninth are referred to by Peter, as, "This Scripture must needs be fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas." They would render "Let their table become a snare" "Their table shall become a snare," and "Let their habitation be desolate" "Their habitation shall be desolate," etc. But are the laws of Hebrew grammar so lax as to allow this? There are certainly awful imperatives that cannot be so juggled with. It is a strong argument against this that the Revisers, notwithstanding the advantages of centuries of scholarship and research, have adhered for the most part to the rendering of these verbs as in the Authorized Version. That these terrible utterances, at least in part, were in substance uttered by the Messiah, there can be no doubt; and that they were in a sense predictive is true. But that the optative prevails in these imprecations is too obvious to admit of debate.

Quoting from the True Psalmody, "we affirm that it is one of the true and God-like excellencies of the Psalms—whatever sentimentalists may say, that they do celebrate the awful justice of God, the most righteous Lawgiver and Judge to Whom vengeance belongeth; His justice in vindicating His truth, His people, and the claims of His Son, and in visiting as they deserve the malig-

nant and impenitent enemies of the Person, the throne, and the grace of Jesus Christ. . . . Philosophy agrees with Christianity that the specific purpose of punishment is retribution; that is, the welfare of the individual is to be disturbed in the same measure as he has disturbed or infringed upon the law of the State. . . . Those supplications would then correspond to the earnest desire of a good monarch, or a just judge, to discover the guilty, that justice might be administered; and the expressions of David, the private individual, ought to be referred to those noble motives which developed the principle that he uttered when a king."

If the critics of these Imprecatory Psalms would take the trouble to acquaint themselves, so far as possible, with the circumstances which gave occasion for them; if they would put themselves in David's place; if they were made to suffer from the base treachery and persistent persecution which he experienced; if they were made to shudder as he at the unblushing violation of God's pure and holy law, their vision might be corrected, and their minds cleared. They would then doubtless join with David in prayer for the destruction of their enemies and God's, for the protection of the righteous, for the honor of God, and for the accomplishment of His gracious designs in the earth. The Church in her course down the stream of time has encountered storms of such material and malignant opposition that she has cried to the God of vengeance in the language of the Imprecatory Psalms, and she has not deemed them any too strong. As the Church has often encountered such storms in wars, persecutions, and in the dreadful treachery of foes, so she will again. In such a time those who have bitterly criticised these Psalms will be the first to feel their need of just such songs, and will make them their language in crying mightily to God.

He who finds no difficulty in praying day by day, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," need find no difficulty in reading and singing the entire Book of Psalms in the wor-

ship of a righteous and holy God. Such exercise is simply honoring God as the divine Monarch to Whom vengeance belongs, and in patience and submission leaving the righting of all wrongs to Him.

It has been well said that "the Imprecatory Psalms lay an emphasis on the truth, that private individuals are not to usurp the place of the magistrate, and take the law into their own hands. These are not wild, disorganizing, Jacobinical songs; not incendiary appeals to a rabble; but they are governmental Psalms; staid, regular, reverential invocations upon the Monarch to wield His own scepter." It is not broadness but narrowness that counts the Imprecatory Psalms uncharitable, scolds them, and refuses to sing them. Get up into the high places. View the Church in her origin, her course, her cost, her beauty, her destiny; and then consider the pusillanimity and perfidy of the generations of Edom who have helped on her affliction. Shall we waste pity on them, or shall we not rather pray the God of the Church to bless her, and perfect His purpose concerning her? A prayer for the peace of Jerusalem, the peace of the Church, is incidentally a prayer for the arrest, and, if need be, the overthrow of those who are the disturbers of her peace.

But lest someone should feel that the strongest and sternest of these imprecations have not been explained and justified, let me ask, Are not some of the most terrible imprecations made to fall upon the man who betrayed to the death your Lord and mine? Are they too terrible for the man who led in the most fearful crime of the ages? How can we do otherwise than say "Amen" to the judgments of God against those who boldly and boastfully "trample under foot the Son of God"? Much has been made of the closing verses of the One Hundred and Thirty-Seventh Psalm, but they have their echo and indorsement in the prophecies of Isaiah: "Everyone that is found shall be thrust through; and everyone that is joined unto them shall fall by the sword. Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives

ravished. Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it. Their bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children. And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah" (xiii. 15-19). It was heaven's decree in the case of Edom and Babel that, having shown no mercy, they should receive no mercy.

Let those who exalt the spirit of the New Testament above the Old ponder the fact that the New Testament often cites the Imprecatory Psalms, but never criticises nor censures their spirit or author. This deserves attention. The generation that shall live out the next thirty years may get a sharpened appetite for these Psalms, may turn to them with a keen relish, and may find them a very suitable vehicle of expression as they turn for help to the only One whence help can come—the God to Whom vengeance belongeth. They may yet be appreciated in seasons of peculiar trial and distress, or in times of persecution from without.

I close with two quotations from the Word of God. The first is in Rev. xv. 2-4: "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest." The second quotation is in Hosea xiv. 9: "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein."

## THE PSALMS AND EVANGELISTIC WORK

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**A**FTER a visit to Wales, where the revival of a year ago was in progress, Rev. William T. Stead, editor of the *Review of Reviews*, of London, was asked if the revival would extend to England. "Yes," he replied, "if they can sing." The answer surprises us because most of us have been led to believe that there are other things far more vital to a revival than singing, though it be melody such as few but the Welsh can render. Yet Mr. Stead had not entirely missed the mark. He has given expression to an almost universal conviction that singing is a most important part of revival and evangelistic work. I suppose that there is a basis in psychology for this belief. Music affects the emotions; the emotions play an important part in our religious experiences; and logic would draw the conclusion that appropriate song has an important part in transforming and renewing the heart. The modern evangelist would as soon think of leaving his sermons at home as failing to take his singer with him. Mr. Moody's name to-day is almost always coupled with that of Mr. Sankey.

I am not asked to explain or defend this fellowship of song and sermon. They are two that God has joined together, and no man should part asunder. But what song is appropriate as the bride of the evangelistic sermon? That is a question on which men are not all of one mind. Mr. Stead in his demand for sweet singing does not specify. He does not mean that any song will do. He meant that such songs as the Welsh were singing, and sung as the Welsh were singing them, would influence even a stolid Englishman, and would so move his heart as to allow the Word of God to affect his belief and conduct.

I cannot give you any idea of Welsh melody, but I can repeat for you the substance of the song most sung during their revival services. It is this:

“Jesus’ blood can raise the feeble  
 As a conqueror to stand;  
 Jesus’ blood is all-pervading  
 O’er the mighty of the land.  
 Let the breezes  
 Blow from Calvary to me.”

The question that is laid before us is just this: Is, or is not, the song of which this stanza is the type the best accompaniment to evangelistic work? There are two ways by which we may come to some conclusion. We may study the history of revivals, or we may analyze the songs to see what is most suitable to promote the aims of a revival.

#### I. THE PLACE OF THE PSALMS IN THE REVIVALS OF THE PAST

A revival does not depend for its reality upon the number of those whose lives have been influenced. Philip was doing the work of an evangelist as truly when he preached to one individual in the wilderness as was Peter when he preached to the thousands at Jerusalem. In the transformings and refreshings of the lives of individuals the Psalms have played a most important part. Strong in the strength they impart, young boys and timid girls have risen from their knees in the great amphitheater, thronged with breathless multitudes, and boldly faced the lions. It was the Psalms which nerved the martyrs for their torture. When the gag was placed in their mouths to keep them in their last hour from singing their praises to God, the fire which mounted round them severed the cords which held the instruments in their place, and with charred lips the sufferers raised their Psalms. The time would fail me to tell of those who have found in the Psalms their strength and de-

termination to do deeds as heroic as any that the Bible recounts. The individual revival is the highest type of revival, and I have been bewildered to find that almost without exception these men and women, some of whom have lived lives obscure, unpicturesque, and almost unknown, have made the Psalms their daily meditation and the expression of their confidence. If for no other reason, the Church should have reverence for the Psalms because of their place in reviving and uplifting the saints of former days.

In some of the semi-religious movements, which may be called revivals, the Psalms have an important place. The Crusades may be called a revival movement, and the Psalms are responsible for much of their enthusiasm. It has been said that the Crusades originated in a misinterpretation of the Psalms. The seventh verse of Psalm cxxxii., which is properly rendered in the English Version, "We will worship at His footstool," was translated in the Vulgate, "Let us adore the Lord in the spot where His feet were placed." Some of the worthy fathers, such as Jerome and Eusebius, considered this to be a command to the faithful to visit the Holy City and its surrounding sacred spots, where Christ Himself had engaged in His devotions, for the purpose of worshiping God. Whether or not this verse gave rise to the Crusades, it is certain that it was the text for many a flaming discourse by bishop and monk and priest in their efforts to begin and carry on the wars against the invaders in the Holy Land. It is an item of no little interest that after the soldiers of the First Crusade scaled the walls of Jerusalem, July 15, 1099, they marched by the light of the burning buildings to the Church of the Resurrection chanting the Psalms. We know that the battle cry of the Templars was Psalm xcv.

Another move of the same sort, which was the result of men awakening from spiritual lethargy, was the effort to abolish the slave trade at the beginning of the last century. Here, too, the Psalms played a larger part as a cause and inspiration than I have time to show. I cite but one example. William



Wilberforce, who moved and finally carried the abolition of the slave trade, was a brilliant young man whose gay wit charmed the town, who played faro while George Selwin held the bank, gambled with Fox, was the bosom friend of Pitt, flirted with Mrs. Crewe, bandied criticism with Madame de Staël, and sang ballads to the Prince of Wales. In 1785 he passed through that crisis which we call conversion. He always retained his natural gayety, but he had a new purpose in life, and part of that purpose was the abolition of the slave trade. From his diary we learn how much his hidden life was fed by the Psalms. For them he had the most profound respect. They molded his life, and so to them must be attributed a part of the success he gained. And when he had carried his bill, it was in the language of the Psalms he expressed his joy, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory." So in our own country in the righteous movement for the liberation of the slaves, the Psalm-singers had their place in the battle line, and the influence of the Psalms was felt; all of which deserves an extended account which I am not able to give. In the great philanthropic and righteous movements, which are practically revivals, the Psalms have played no secondary part.

Any history of the pure revivals and reformations which have brought new life and vigor to the Church must magnify the Psalms. I suppose that the first great national revival of history was when the chains of Egyptian bondage were broken, and Israel crossed the Red Sea that they might serve God according to His ordinances. As they stood on the shore and saw their miraculous deliverance, Moses and Miriam led in the singing of an inspired hymn of praise. After their victory in Canaan it was an inspired song that Deborah and Barak sang. In the revivals which occurred during the administration of Asa, Jehoshaphat, Josiah, Ezra, and Nehemiah, there is no question that the Psalms were sung and were found sufficient. The great feasts observed at Jerusalem were revival seasons. It was to the measure of the Psalms that they marched to the city, and

Psalms were constantly on their lips while the feast was in progress.

In the great evangelistic campaign carried on by the Apostles there is not a great deal of evidence to show that they sang, as well as preached, in the services they conducted. But there are enough hints to satisfy a reasonable man. In the prison at Philippi Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God. It was surely not a new exercise with them. What they did in that midnight hour and in the prison they certainly did in other hours and in other places. Paul exhorts his converts to speak "to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, to sing and make melody in your hearts to the Lord"; to "teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Paul would not have dared to give such precepts without having given his own example also. In that first Christian evangelistic movement, the most successful the world has ever known, the Psalms only were the material of song.

In the great spiritual awakening of the Reformation the Psalms filled a larger place than can be described in the bounds of this paper. Dr. Clokey declares: "The world in the Reformation witnessed to an extent never known before, and never, probably, to be known again till the millennium dawn, an enthusiasm of praise," and the praises were taken almost entirely from the Psalter. Luther's version of the Forty-Sixth Psalm, beginning with the words, "Eine feste Burg," which is said to have been written but a short time before going to Worms, and which he sang standing in his chariot as he approached the city on the memorable 10th of April, has been called "The Marseillaise Hymn of the Reformation." His enemies testified to the power of these inspired songs over the popular mind when the Jesuit Adam Contzen says, "The hymns of Luther have ruined more souls than all his writings and sermons."

In Switzerland and France, where the Psalms were adhered to more literally and strictly than by Luther, their influence was

equally powerful. I will take time to give one example of how the Psalms were sung in Paris during the reign of Henry II. A hand-to-hand conflict had occurred between the Huguenots and the monks in Pre-aux-Clercs, in which the monks had been driven from the promenade. Afterwards, so Beza tells us, the Protestants would meet here on summer evenings and sing their favorite Psalms. So popular did this summer-evening Psalm-singing become that hundreds of the citizens of Paris resorted to it as to an entertainment. At first they laughed at the Psalmody of the Christians, but the number of the singers increased, and the audience grew until even the king and his lords and gentlemen were present in the great assembly. Thus were the Psalms carried to the multitude, where they became one of the prime agencies in promoting a pure Christianity. By these songs the truths of God's Word were disseminated with a rapidity not equaled even by preaching of evangelists and teachers. Their melody was heard in many a nook of Catholicism and infidelity, where the voice of the clergy was never raised. The teachings of the Roman Church came to be despised, and when at last the Pope and his followers became aroused, their wrath was directed especially against the Psalmody of the Huguenots, which they regarded as the great instrument of their heresy.

I must pass by the Reformation in England, Scotland, and Ireland, but this one sentence from a distinguished writer will be enough to show the place of the Psalms in these movements: "Men's affections to the work of reformation were everywhere measured by the singing or not singing of the translated Psalms." The early revivals in our own country must also be passed by in a word. Of the most notable of these revivals, early in the eighteenth century, in which Jonathan Edwards took a prominent part, he bears this testimony: "The goings of God were seen in His sanctuary. God's day was a delight, and His tabernacles were amiable. Our public assemblies were then beautiful; the congregation was alive in God's praise. Our public praises were then greatly enlivened. God was then served in His sanc-

tuary in some measure in the beauty of holiness. It has been observable that there has been scarcely any part in the divine worship wherein good men amongst us have had grace so drawn forth, and their hearts so lifted up, as in the singing of His praises." According to his testimony the prominent and striking feature of this revival, as of many another, was its inspired Psalmody.

History will teach us this lesson most plainly, that there have been no revivals more thorough, no evangelistic movements more sweeping and lasting in their results, than those in which the manual of praise has been the old songs of Zion which we hold so dear.

## II. THE SUITABLENESS OF THE PSALMS FOR EVANGELISTIC WORK

Any objection to the use of the Psalms in evangelistic work must rest on the ground that they do not present the facts which it is desirable to present in the fullest and best way. I propose to take a list of the truths which should be emphasized, as given by one of the prominent evangelists of the present day; not because it is the best list I have ever seen, but because it has been prepared by one who does not use the Psalms in his services. In as few words as I can, I wish to show how well the Psalms meet his requirements.

1. The existence and presence of the living Christ must be presented. That the Second Person of the Godhead is in the Psalms has been clearly shown. His relationship to the Father, His human generation, His birth, all the great facts of His life, especially His sufferings, death, and resurrection, His attributes and offices are all fully portrayed. The existence of the ever-living Christ appears in the songs of the Spirit, by Whom He is named as Jehovah, God, Messiah, Anointed, King, Priest, Rock, and Shepherd. The Psalms proclaim the presence of Christ with believers. He is the One Who cannot be avoided: "If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morn-

ing and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me." He is present to save us from our enemies: "The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him and delivereth them." He is present to supply all our wants: "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good"; He "satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." If we must present the existence and presence of the living Christ, the Psalms do it.

2. There must be no uncertain statement concerning sin. And where do you find sin pictured as in the Psalms? It is the leprosy which defiles all men: "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." It is something that God abhors: "The wicked and him that loveth violence His soul hateth." It is something that breaks our communications with God: "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me." Every wrongdoing which injures our fellow-man is a sin against God: "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned." Every sin is known to God: "My sins are not hid from Thee"; "Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance." Every phase of the heinousness and consequences of sin is found in the Psalms.

3. There must be presented a Saviour Who is able to save to the uttermost. There is no book in the Bible where the words "save" and "salvation" are so frequently used as in the Book of Psalms. Salvation is attributed to Him: "Salvation belongeth to the Lord," "He only is my Rock and my Salvation." He saves us from sin: "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." He saves us from all that distresses: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." He saves us in the hour of death: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me . . . And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." It is a salvation offered to all: "He shall judge

the poor of the people, and shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. For He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in His sight." There is no lack of teaching of the power and readiness of Christ to save.

4. There must be presented the thought of One Who will keep after once we are saved. The Psalms declare that He will keep us "as the apple of the eye." "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." "For Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favor wilt Thou compass him as with a shield." God's care of His people is abundantly proclaimed in such Psalms.

5. There must be laid upon us the thought of responsibility for service. Is it a service of praise that we should render? "Serve the Lord with gladness: come before His presence with singing." Is it a service of personal work in preaching His gospel? "I will declare Thy name unto my brethren." "Declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among the people." Is it the giving of our means to serve Him? "Bring an offering and come into His courts."

A specialist in evangelistic work has told us what is required, and you find it all in the Psalms in a larger measure than I have displayed. And you find more than this in the Psalms. No revival can be a true revival which does not exalt God and give worship to Him. The Psalter is the only book of praise which makes any pretensions of doing more than preaching the gospel in song. It is all that the others are, and in addition it is an inspired Book of Worship. A careful analysis of the Psalms will show their sufficiency. The history of revivals will prove their efficiency. The evangelist who goes forth with a pure gospel and with these Spirit-given songs has all that he needs to melt hard hearts and win men to holy living.

## THE PSALMS AND EVANGELISTIC WORK

BY THE REV. W. H. PATTERSON, PH. D., PRINCETON, IND.

**T**HERE can be, on the part of one who is thoughtful, little objection urged to the use of the Psalms in the formal worship of the sanctuary. In their grandeur and stateliness they are eminently suited in every way to the service. The real point at issue will finally be seen to be the suitability, or it may be unsuitability, of the Psalms for the less formal songs of the people, in Sabbath-school, prayer meetings, and evangelistic services. If there is failure here, our position must necessarily be abandoned, since these services are believed to be ordained of God. The question, then, of the suitability and sufficiency of God's inspired songs for evangelistic work is one of the most important that can come before us, and is worthy hours of discussion.

Under the heading "Evangelistic Work" there is included, without doubt, the thought of revival services, which, though theoretically different, are, in popular usage, practically synonymous with evangelistic services. We will naturally presume that a study of the history of the Church in such times of quickening will shed some light on this topic. Few will object to the statement that in the great revivals among the ancient people of God the songs that were used were the God-inspired Songs of the Psalter. Coming up through the Christian Church in Apostolic times, and even some centuries later, no one has authority for the statement that songs other than these were used in any religious service. If songs were used or needed on Pentecost or the days of spiritual quickening which followed, they were assuredly these Songs of Zion. With the dawning light upon the world after the Dark Ages we hear the Waldenses singing

these songs in a time of marvelous quickening of the spiritual life. In the Church of Rome at this time, and even much later, there was no congregational singing of any sort. With Calvin, Luther, and the Reformation came the most notable revival that the world has ever seen. What did Luther do but pick the old Latin Psalter out of the rubbish of Rome, where it had lain for nine hundred years, wipe the dust of the ages from it, translate it into the German tongue, write metrical versions and paraphrases, set them to music, and teach the people to sing them? Such a prominent place did these songs occupy in these revival movements, both in Germany and France, that at the Council of Trent the Emperor of Germany and King of France, through their representatives, urgently requested that permission be granted for the singing of the Psalms in modern languages by the full congregation in the Roman Catholic churches of those countries. The request was not granted; but more than a hundred years later, 1679, a papal hymn-book was published at Mentz, containing many of Luther's songs, and the Jesuit Adam Contzen bore this testimony, "The hymns of Luther have ruined more souls than all his writings and sermons; and hence the rulers of the Church must also employ as a medicine that which the deceivers have invented as a destroyer." Lorimer, in his "Church of France," says, "In 1535 the Psalms of David were turned into verse by one of the popular poets of the day, and set to melodious music. This was attended with remarkable success. This one ordinance contributed mightily to the downfall of Popery and the propagation of the gospel." As is well known, the Psalms were used as the exclusive praise of the Scottish Church in the First and Second Reformations. These songs were heard on the mountains, in the glens, on the moors, and as well at the scaffold and the stake. Vast crowds attended the preaching of Livingston, and the power was almost Pentecostal, for as many as five hundred were converted under a single sermon. When they gathered in the "Kirkyards," in "God's Acre," listening to McCheyne and others, continuing their meet-



ings often till midnight, they felt no necessity for uninspired songs. Precisely the same conditions have been noted in Ireland, in the revived churches under the Bruces, Welshes, Cunninghams, Blairs, and Livingstons, when whole districts were aroused and, almost to a man, turned to God. Under what was described as "the most glorious and extensive revival of religion and reformation of manners America has ever known," under the Edwardses and Tennants and others from 1730 to 1740, these Songs of God were very largely used; but from this time on we find a growing use of uninspired songs in evangelistic services—due no doubt largely, at the beginning, to the attempted justification of such hymns by Jonathan Edwards himself, until at present there is little or no use of Scripture hymns except by the Psalm-singing Churches.

The place of the song-service in evangelistic work has been greatly exalted in recent years, dating from the time of Mr. Sankey and Mr. Bliss and their so-called "singing of the gospel." At the present time it is not supposed to be possible to conduct such a service without a special leader of song, or singing evangelist, and a large chorus choir. It may well be questioned whether or not too great dependence is placed in the mere song-service, and too little in the mighty working of God's Spirit.

A large part of the song-service is for—not precisely entertainment—attraction. This accounts for good singers, large choruses, and instruments of music. People are attracted to places where there is good music. The matter of words, so far as the people are concerned, seems to be of little importance, except that the songs must be known as "sacred." Such singing does not quite belong to revival work proper, but has to do with the securing of the audience. No one can doubt that the great Hallelujah choruses of the Psalms are eminently fitted for splendid singing, and, if rendered as they ought to be, their attractiveness would be all that could be desired. It is worth noting that in every song there are human elements, even though

the song be an inspired Psalm; and, further, that it is in the human elements that we find the weaknesses. God made the words, but man made the music; and oftentimes the man has failed to rise to the point of appreciation of the fact that he was writing music for inspired words. Then, although God has inspired the words, and they set forth His majesty most excellent, His power boundless, His wisdom manifold, His faithfulness unchanging, His mercy everlasting, and His love matchless, saving, eternal, yet too often the singer fails to do his part of the work. No matter how exalted the words, if the song be poorly rendered, with cracked and nasal voice, and in every way inartistic, and without due recognition of the thoughts which the words express, this part of the service will be a failure, at least so far as attractiveness is concerned. The only difficulty with the Psalms has been in the human element,—either the music was unsuitable, or the rendition miserable. Here, for instance, is Mr. Gabriel's great "Glory Song," which has been sung everywhere with such effect, particularly in England by Mr. Charles M. Alexander, the singer who has accompanied Dr. Torrey,—“When by His grace I shall look on His face, That will be glory for me.” It is certainly one of the most stirring, attractive, and impressive choruses ever written. Just as good music, however, can be written—although it never has been—to these words of the Psalmist with similar thought, “I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness.” The words are so much better; and the people would sing them just as readily if the music were as good.

Sometimes we hear it remarked that such and such hymns have been instrumental in saving so many souls, usually hundreds or thousands. There is a great opportunity for a man to be mistaken when he makes such a statement. No man may tell all the influences that the Spirit uses in drawing a man to Christ. The psychological effect of a song is not definitely understood, but some things seem to be known. For example, it is known that evangelistic music, to be effective, must be in

“march time,” usually “four-four” or “six-eight”; that is to say, it must be a song that will *move*. Triple time has a tendency to keep people moving in a small circle—a waltz. If people are to move forward in any decision for Christ, they can best do so, so far as music is a help, to moving music.

Now, as to the effect of the words, a few points claim our attention. Mr. Alexander, to whom reference has been made, in an article in a recent religious journal mentions, almost apologetically, it would seem, a song which he has found useful everywhere in evangelistic work. It is the old Negro melody, “Old-time religion.” The effect of this song when first sung is to provoke a smile, but the tune is simple and “catchy,” and everybody joins in it. By the time the tune has been sung through half a dozen times, and the “old-time religion” has been declared to be “good enough” for Noah, David, Nicodemus, Simon Peter, Paul and Silas, and others, it begins to assume more serious phases, and comes nearer home. Now it is good enough for father, good enough for mother—and the mind will run back to the old home, the old family altar, the old church, and a man’s heart is becoming softened under precious memories. There are few people in a Christian land whose memories do not hold for them songs that recall the days of home and mother,—the songs that mother used to sing. These songs may be the Psalms, they may be the familiar hymns—probably in the case of most people they are, or they may be mere secular songs. The writer’s mother was not given to singing hymns, but two old Scotch songs she used to sing are wholly sufficient to start at any time these memories of childhood. They are “Flow gently, Sweet Afton,” and “Ye banks and braes o’ Bonnie Doon.” If you knew the songs to sing it is probable that you could touch a tender spot in almost any man’s heart, and some of them would be strange songs, too, and might not be suitable for evangelistic services. Half of the effect is due to the thoughts which gather around the name “mother,” and half of it is due to the rebuke which the inno-

gency and purity of the old child-life now give to the impure, sinful man. The song itself has no converting power unless it gives utterance to a message from God's own Word; but these songs may be used in enlisting the attention and in rendering the mind impressionable.

Man's emotional nature cannot be overlooked or disregarded, but if there are to be real results in a transformed and renewed life, much more than mere emotion is necessary. Songs for emotional effect are largely used in modern evangelistic work. Such are those which portray vividly the physical sufferings of Jesus, or the heroism of those who "sailed through bloody seas," or those appealing to memories of childhood, or picture the reunion with friends in a better world, on the style of "O think of the friends over there," or "When the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there," or something that suggests the "ever-green shores" and a good time. This is no part of the Scriptural thought of conversion.

There must be, first of all, conviction of sin. This can come through the Spirit of God alone, and the use of God's Word which is His "sword." This is so clearly the Scriptural idea that we are perfectly justified in assuming that the God Who gave us the Psalms will bless the use of the Psalms to the conviction and conversion of sinners. We need not allow any sudden movement to jolt us from this position. There must be for the soul something more than a desire, however intense, to see again in a better world the old neighbors and friends; there must be a view of God as His character is revealed to us, in His wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. It has been clearly pointed out that nowhere in the Scriptures can such a view be obtained as in the inspired Psalter. Let a man stand, if he can, in the presence of such a God, and then he will see himself as he really is, a sinner, and will cry out:

"Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned,  
Done evil in Thy sight." (Ps. li.)

Desirable as such an attitude is for the sinner, God does not leave a man there. There must be the inspiration of hope which the Word of God alone can give. Is there help for man in his dire need?

“Lord, who shall stand, if Thou, O Lord,  
 Shouldest mark iniquity?  
 But yet with Thee forgiveness is,  
 That feared Thou mayest be.

Redemption, plentiful and free,  
 Is ever found with Him;  
 And He from all iniquity  
 Shall Israel redeem.” (Psalm cxxx.)

Do doubts enter the heart? Is this news too good to be true?

“Hath God forgotten to be kind?  
 His tender love in wrath confined?  
 My weakness this; yet faith doth stand  
 Recalling years of God’s right hand.” (Psalm lxxvii.)

A number of years ago, when Mr. Moody was conducting services in Des Moines, he bore testimony to this particular song. He said, “I can’t get that song out of my mind, ‘Hath God forgotten to be kind? . . . My weakness this; yet faith doth stand.’”

Now let there be the definite act of acceptance of Jesus as the Saviour:

“Lord, my God, in Thee I’m trusting,  
 Thou wilt hear me when I call;  
 Hear, lest they against me boasting,  
 Joy and triumph when I fall.” (Psalm xxxviii.)

The song which is invariably sung in evangelistic services conducted by hymn-singing churches is this:

“Just as I am, without one plea,  
 But that Thy blood was shed for me.”

This beautiful poem by Charlotte Elliott is found in every hymnal, and is everywhere regarded as one upon which God's blessing has rested in a marvelous way. Let me place beside it a song of the Spirit containing much of the same thought, but incomparably better :

“O Lord, my Saviour, now to Thee,  
Without a hope besides, I flee.” (Psalm cxlii.)

The condition upon which this song of God could everywhere be substituted for the other with its human errors is that a tune be wedded to the words, like the old tune “Woodworth” is wedded to “Just as I am,” of such character and pitch that it can be sung in a subdued tone, with bowed heads, and bowed hearts, and that almost anyone in the audience can start it. Some of the tunes which we sing to this Psalm are open to severe criticism in just these particulars.

Now, is there to be an expression of confidence in the One Who has become a living reality to the soul? Are we shut up to merely human words such as these :

“My faith looks up to Thee,  
Thou Lamb of Calvary,  
Saviour divine”?

By no means. Let us take such as these :

“My soul with expectation doth  
Depend on God indeed;  
My strength and my salvation do  
From Him alone proceed.

He only my salvation is,  
And my strong rock is He;  
He only is my sure defense,  
Much moved I shall not be.” (Psalm lxii.)

Now, if the soul wants a word of praise—and it surely does—where will it find words to express it if not in the Psalms?

"This poor man cried, God heard, and him  
From all distress redeemed." (Psalm xxxiv.)

or this,

"And I with voice of singing  
Will praise the Lord alone;  
Because to me His favor  
He hath so largely shown." (Psalm xliii.)

He needs leadership, and feels it; how shall he make known his want? Shall it be "Lead, Kindly Light," which may mean anything a man will make it mean, be he Pantheist, Buddhist, or Christian? Here is something better:

"Now Thy light and truth forth sending,  
Let them lead and guide me still;  
Guide me to Thy house ascending,  
Lead me to Thy holy hill." (Psalm xliiii.)

Let us now have a word of testimony in song from one who has so recently found the light: "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." Here are uninspired words:

"Hallelujah! 'Tis done!  
I believe on the Son!"

Here are inspired words:

"All that fear God, come, hear, I'll tell  
What He did for my soul." (Psalm lxvi.)

We expect him to work among his neighbors and friends, and thus he makes his appeal to them:

"O taste and see that God is good,  
Who trusts in Him is blest." (Psalm xxxiv.)

We all need our faith encouraged by hymns that assure us of the keeping power of God. Here is one uninspired:

"I need Thee every hour."

Here is one inspired :

“Hold Thou me up, so shall I be  
In peace and safety still.” (Psalm cxix.)

Here is another :

“Keep me as the apple of the eye.” (Psalm xvii.)

Here is another :

“As round about Jerusalem  
The mountains ever stand,  
So God His people will surround,  
And evermore defend.” (Psalm cxxv.)

It is the singing of such songs as these that makes what other denominations are pleased to call the “picked membership” of the Psalm-singing Churches; and these unemotional songs have a tendency to reduce to the minimum the shrinkage in the results of a series of meetings in these Churches.

This cry, which is ever sounding in our ears, that the Psalms are unsuitable for evangelistic work, and that there is no Christ in them, is simply an advertisement of ignorance as to the real character of the Psalms. The statement may be made in all confidence that hymn-singing Churches usually know but a single Psalm, the Twenty-Third; a few know also the One Hundredth. These are excellent samples, but there are one hundred and forty-eight others which God saw fit to place with them in His inspired Book of Praise. When once introduced, thoughtful people express themselves as astonished at the happy selections which have been made from the Psalms for this special work, and the statement is most freely made that they “did not know of such songs.” The whole difficulty with the Church of God in the world, United Presbyterians and all, in the matter of praise, is that we are not sufficiently acquainted with these Spiritual Songs of the Word.



## THE PSALMS AND MISSIONS

BY THE REV. ALEXANDER GILCHRIST, D. D., PITTSBURGH, PA.

**T**HE great thought of God for this world is the establishing and perfecting in the whole earth the Kingdom of righteousness. This glorious consummation is more than a thought; it is a divine and eternal purpose, which becomes more apparent as revelation and the progress of events through the ages make clearer the mind and will of God concerning man. This is the burden of the messages of prophets, the central truth in the ministry of Christ, and the supreme fact in the teachings of inspired evangelists and Apostles. Through what agency shall this stupendous achievement be wrought? The only answer is, "The Church of God, which He purchased with His own blood." Of it has it been written, "The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." Through it "the Lord God shall cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations." Surely this is a glorious task, calculated to inspire exultant feelings in the hearts of God's people. The Church of God is therefore a singing Church, and as she goes forth to her divinely appointed work of world-wide conquest she is commanded by her Lord to "break forth into singing." God has given her the message of salvation that she is to speak to the sons of men, and likewise has He furnished her with the songs that she is to sing in the ears and commend to the hearts and tongues of the inhabitants of earth.

The Church is a missionary Church, and therefore her message and her music must be missionary in spirit and in substance. This essential fact is fully and prominently recognized in the whole divine economy relating to the Church. The mes-

sage to be spoken by her to the world flashes with burning missionary zeal and thunders with the power of missionary truth. With the same spirit are her songs aflame, and with even more tremendous force do they fall upon the ears and hearts of men.

The relation of the Psalms to missions appears:

I. In their design and scope. The manifest design of the inspired Psalter is to furnish a manual of praise for universal use. This implies the enlightenment of the race by the dissemination of the knowledge of divine truth among men everywhere and the conversion of the peoples of earth. How can they be expected to praise Him Whom they do not know, or glorify in song Him in Whom they do not believe as their Almighty Maker, Sovereign, and Saviour? It is the redeemed man, who has been lifted from the fearful pit and the miry clay, and he only, who can take up the song that has been provided as the proper and acceptable expression of grateful praise to the God of salvation. It is the ransomed race, and it alone, that can lift to God the mighty chorus of universal praise contemplated in the Psalms. These divinely prepared songs require a divinely prepared people to render them, and their real purpose can only be fulfilled when they become the matter of the world's devotional song. Like their divine Author, they have power to stir the souls of men and turn them toward God and righteousness. For this end must they assuredly have been given to the Church, which is intended and commanded to evangelize the whole world. Faithful and efficient servants have they been in all the ages, as they were intended to be, in proclaiming abroad the truth that saves. Of them, as of the saints of the Most High, it may be said:

“Thy Kingdom's glory they shall show,  
They also shall Thy power tell,  
That so men's sons His deeds may know,  
His Kingdom's grace that doth excel.”

The wondrous scope of the Psalms, which is world-wide, indicates their missionary character and excellence. In every

line and feature they bear the mark of universality. They are the songs for the people of every tribe, of every realm, and every tongue. In trumpet tones their stirring call is:

“All people that on earth do dwell  
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.”

In confident and triumphant spirit they constantly sing of a universal Kingdom of righteousness and peace, and contemplate nothing less than the world-wide and everlasting dominion of Christ:

“From sea to sea shall be His sway,  
And from the river to earth’s end.”

Between the time when this sublime prediction was given poetic expression and the glorious era of its fulfilment stretch centuries of conflict between truth and error, between righteousness and sin, centuries of missionary struggle while

“Kings of earth in plots engage,  
Rulers are in league combined”

against the Lord and His Anointed, but steadily forward move the conquering hosts of God, fired by the spirit of the songs of their warfare, and encouraged by the assurance which these songs give of ultimate and universal victory, the coming of the day of complete triumph of their Lord, when

“All kings before Him down shall fall,  
All nations shall His laws obey.”

The relation of the Bible Psalter to missions may further be seen

II. In the missionary spirit of the Psalms. The dominant note in the mighty melody of the inspired Psalter is missionary. They fire the hearts of God’s people with a consuming zeal for the extension of His Kingdom. Scarcely have the sacramental

hosts begun to sing the songs of God when they are heard chanting in exultant strain:

“Ask, for heritage I'll make  
All the heathen nations Thine;  
Thou shalt in possession take  
Earth to its remotest line.”

Moreover, they call upon people everywhere to bow to the scepter of God's power, and yield to the entreaties and persuasion of His love and grace.

Filled with the Spirit Who maketh intercession, these songs breathe the most ardent and imploring prayers for the conversion of the world. What a tremendous appeal of holy desire rolls up to the throne of God in the soulful lyric of the Sixty-Seventh Psalm, when the Church pleads for divine blessing to enable her to accomplish her glorious work of spreading the gospel throughout the earth:

“O God, to us show mercy  
And bless us in Thy grace,  
Cause Thou to shine upon us  
The brightness of Thy face;  
That so throughout all nations  
Thy way may be well known,  
And unto every people  
Thy saving health be shown.”

All prayers for the coming of the Kingdom of God seem to be gathered up in this wonderful expression of holy desire and expectation. When the Gentile nations were given the Hebrew Scriptures in the Greek language there was awakened in the Gentile heart, largely it is believed through the influence of the Psalms, the hope and expectation that from among the Jewish people would spring a Mighty One Who would be the redeemer of the whole world. They could scarcely fail to catch the spirit of these lofty productions which present a King and Redeemer Who establishes a Kingdom that is destined to become world-wide.

From prayer for the coming of God's Kingdom in the world the Psalms move forward in ever increasing confidence until, referring to the nations of earth, they declare:

"All nations, Lord, whom Thou hast made  
Shall come and praise proclaim;  
Before Thy face they worship shall,  
And glorify Thy name."

And, referring to the ultimate extent of the Kingdom, they proclaim:

"Earth's utmost bounds shall hear and turn,  
All tribes and realms Thy worship learn."

After reciting the signal triumphs of the past, and portraying with dramatic power the onward progress of the Kingdom of Christ, sometimes sweeping away obstacles and overcoming opposition by overwhelming force, and again melting hardened hearts and subduing rebellious lives by the gentleness and majestic sweetness of infinite tenderness and love, these songs rise to the highest pitch of missionary enthusiasm in the triumphant shout:

"The heirs of Gentile thrones  
With Abram's children meet.  
The shields of earth Jehovah owns;  
Exalted is His seat."

The propriety of associating the Psalms with missions appears also from

III. The contents of the Psalms, and their suitability for missionary uses. Being the utterances of the divine Spirit, Whose office it is to lead into all truth, these Psalms are the singing evangelists of the ages, enlightening the minds and converting the souls of men by the power of divine truth which they present in winsome and melodious form. Instinct with the mighty power of the eternal Spirit, they are calculated to

“convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” They reach the heart and stir the soul as only the voice of God can do. The glorious work of missions advances just in such measure and with such rapidity as the conquering truth of God gains sway over the thought and lives of men. The Psalms are a most potent agency for establishing and promoting the Kingdom of truth, for they are the words of eternal truth. The gospel is the divine instrument for the conversion of the world, and Professor Delitzsch says, “There is no essential New Testament truth that is not contained in the Psalms.” They are the heavenly voices singing to the world the glad tidings of salvation. By their use the great Bible ideas and images are kept before the mind in most striking and impressive form. The Gentile nations are the infant nations of the world, and are therefore most attracted and impressed by the majestic imagery of the Book of Psalms, and most readily influenced by the subtle power of their heavenly melody.

The essential element of power in all missionary effort is the true conception and reality of God lying behind it and running through it. The deepest need of the human soul is God. It is likewise the world's deepest need. Moreover, the soul, and the world as well, will have a God of some sort. To people groping in the night of spiritual darkness and despair, not satisfied with the gods many and lords many, the creations of their own imagination, God gives the songs of enlightenment, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, the true God. The keynote of the Psalms is the exalted and holy character of God, the Almighty Sovereign, the Everlasting Father, the divine friend of all men, Who would have all men to be saved. On whatever plane they begin, to whatever limit they may reach in their varied and diversified ranges of thought, the Psalms always rise to this supreme height, enthroning God in glorious majesty above earth and sky, and yet coming so near to man in condescending love and mercy that He is not far from every one.

The Psalms furnish another indispensable equipment for missionary work. They have in them a Christ and a Cross. They describe the glorious character and achievements of the Messiah. They are not the conception of man, but a transcript of God's idea of the divine Son. Ages before the incarnate Christ appeared on earth God is saying in the Second Psalm, "Unto the Son your homage pay." This is simply another form of the mighty message that broke from heaven at a later day, "This is my beloved Son; hear Him." As attested by Himself, "It is written in the Psalms concerning Me." In their glorious visions they present the uplifted Christ, the hope of the world's redemption, the constant theme and song of the missionary hosts as they go forth to make conquest of the world for their Lord and King. At the same time these songs of the Spirit are a mighty inspiration to the servants of Christ as they go forth in His name conquering and to conquer, for they thrill in every line with unconquerable faith and splendid heroism, cheering, comforting, and encouraging missionaries as they encounter the powers of darkness and are surrounded by idolaters and the devotees of false religions.

The majestic themes of these songs meet the needs and circumstances of people everywhere and at all times, and voice the deepest convictions and longings of the soul, whatever may be its surroundings or experiences. These heaven-born songs for millenniums have commended themselves as the best and loftiest poetic expression of divine truth as it appeals to peoples alienated from God and as the most suitable matter of praise for a redeemed race. Let them continue to be sung until the reign of Christ shall have been extended throughout the whole earth, and the people of every kindred and every tongue shall sing with one accord:

"The great salvation of our God  
Is seen through all the earth abroad;  
Before the heathen's wondering sight  
He hath revealed His truth and right."

## THE PSALMS AND MISSIONS

BY THE REV. CHARLES R. WATSON, D. D., PHILADELPHIA, PA.

**A**RE the Psalms missionary in spirit? This is the question before us, and a vital question it is—vital to the right of the Psalms to a place in the worship of the Church. For it were an insuperable objection to the use of the Psalms in the worship of the modern Church if this volume of praise did not set forth the great aim and the supreme hope of the Christian Church in this missionary dispensation. Reverting to the question, "Are the Psalms missionary in spirit," two lines of proof establish an affirmative answer to the question. On the one hand, the Psalms present certain fundamental conceptions and principles which lie at the very base of, and lead inexorably to, the missionary idea. On the other hand, going beyond this, the Psalms explicitly set forth God's claim to a world-wide kingdom. Taking these up in turn, we have

I. UNIVERSALISTIC CONCEPTIONS OR PRINCIPLES. By this we mean those conceptions and principles which transcend all racial, national, and sectional limitations, sweep out over the whole world, and thus possess world-wide scope. Without elaboration, it will be seen at a glance that all such universalistic conceptions lead inexorably to the missionary idea.

1. *We note, first, that God, in the Psalms, stands related to the whole world as Creator.* Is it objected that this is only a material or physical relationship? So be it. "That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual" (I Cor. xv. 46).<sup>1</sup> "As in all the spheres of divine operation," says Dr. James Orr, "grace invariably presupposes nature, so is it in this." The unqualified ascription to God of

<sup>1</sup> All quotations in this paper are from the American Revised Version.



the creation of all things prepares the way for the assertion and the recognition of His ownership of all things; and this thought of divine ownership is a necessary foundation which must be laid securely before we may pass on to the thought of a divinely projected Kingdom. Even your benevolent philanthropist must first establish his proprietorship over a given property before he may project upon it his plans for its improvement.

Note then how God is declared to be Creator of all things: The heavens are the work of His fingers; the moon and the stars are ordained by Him (Ps. viii. 3). The firmament is His handiwork (Ps. xix. 1). His hands formed the dry land (Ps. xcv. 5). The son of man is His creation (Ps. viii. 5). Like a rich bass, through the melody of praise, runs this ascription of glory to God as Creator, until in Psalms cxxxvi. and cxlviii. it rises to a magnificent Jubilate, and the whole universe is marshaled before us and ascribed to the creative power of Jehovah, Who "commanded and they were created." As Creator Jehovah is vested with full rights of ownership: "The sea is His, and He made it" (Ps. xcv. 5). The claim is indisputable. "The earth is Jehovah's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For He hath founded it" (Ps. xxiv. 12). "Every beast of the forest" is His, and "the cattle upon a thousand hills" (Ps. 1. 10). Thus, as Creator of the universe, Jehovah is owner of it. His ownership of it gives Him the right to project His divine will upon it. These conceptions lie at the base of our modern missionary activity: "The earth is Jehovah's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Ps. xxiv. 12). True, but His divine rights are not recognized on every side. To the Christian Church is committed the task, with "the Sword of the Spirit," to conquer and bring into loving subjection the world which is His.

2. *We note, second, that God, in the Psalms, stands related to the whole world of moral beings as the great moral Judge.* Here, too, is a universalistic conception, and one which lies at the base of a sound missionary idea. Here is no tribal or racial God,

setting up petty and artificial standards of life and conduct adapted only to a given age or race. Here is a God of essential righteousness, Whose laws and standards, essential like Himself, go forth into every age and place, testing every creature possessed of moral quality, regardless of rank or riches, of color or caste, of tribe or tongue. The character of this Jehovah God is the great Moral Norm, and He Himself is the Judge Universal from Whom none may escape. We need only compare the ethical conceptions of the Psalms with the petty and artificial requirements of any heathen moral code to realize the universal and fundamental character of the ethics of the Psalms, and to understand why the religion which inspired this high morality is inexorably destined to become world-wide, while other religions may not rise above that which is local and restricted.

Any extended notice of the moral qualities which are made to gather in the Psalms about the being and law of God belongs to other papers dealing with the ethical teachings of the Psalms, but a few brief references will help to emphasize their universalistic character: Cleanness of hands, obedience (Ps. xviii. 20, 21), purity, righteousness (Ps. xix. 8, 9), truth (Ps. xxv. 5), loving-kindness, faithfulness (Ps. xxxvi. 5), dependence on God, gladdening influences (Ps. lxxxiv. 5, 6), mercy, peace (Ps. lxxxv. 10), justice (Ps. lxxxix. 14), honor, graciousness, uprightness (Ps. cxi. 3, 4, 8), fearlessness (Ps. cxii. 7), undefiledness, heart-righteousness, lip-righteousness, large-heartedness, singleness of heart, boldness in the truth, loyalty, zeal, hope (Ps. cxix. 9, 11, 13, 32, 34, 46, 75, 139, 166), tender mercy (Ps. cxlv. 9)—upon these the Psalmist rings the changes again and again. These moral qualities are so fundamental, so free from the artificial, or even the ceremonial, that they are universalistic in their applicability to moral beings everywhere.

Neither is this moral code alone *fitted* to world-wide application, but Jehovah God is represented as *actually going forth* with this moral code *to judge men* and their works by it—not Israelites alone, but men generally: "Jehovah looked down from

heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek after God" (Ps. xiv. 2). "Jehovah, His throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men" (Ps. xi. 4). "Jehovah looketh from heaven; He beholdeth all the sons of men from the place of His habitation. He looketh forth upon all the inhabitants of the earth" (Ps. xxxiii. 13, 14). But the Psalms go even further than this and reveal God, not only as *passing* judgment, but also as *executing* judgment upon men everywhere for their moral character and conduct. They cannot escape Him by casting off allegiance to Him. They do not escape Him because they belong to some other than the chosen race: "Thou sittest in the throne judging righteously. Thou hast rebuked the nations. Thou hast destroyed the wicked" (Ps. ix. 4, 5).

In fitness, then, in actual application, and in execution, the moral judgments of Jehovah are universalistic. This is essential to the missionary idea, for to the Christian Church is given the commission to preach to a heedless world that inexorable righteousness which stands over human life everywhere, with its impending judgment of sin, and to offer to that world the only way of salvation.

We have considered two great conceptions of the Psalms which are universalistic in their scope and which lay a foundation for the missionary idea.

II. WE NOW TURN TO THOSE EXPLICIT STATEMENTS SETTING FORTH A WORLD-WIDE KINGDOM, THE KINGDOM OF GOD AMONG MEN—the goal of all missionary effort, the end of all the activities of God, both in Providence and by the Spirit in His dealings with the human race. If all the Psalms could be dated with accuracy, it would be possible doubtless to show with greater clearness the advances made in the revelation to Israel of God's world-wide Kingdom. Going back to Abraham's call, we find the Kingdom of God on earth—the sphere within which His will was freely recognized and obeyed—identified with a single family. As the family grows to a clan, it is Israel which stands

as the visible exponent of the Kingdom of God. As the clan becomes a nation, it is the Jewish nation which represents the Kingdom of God upon earth. It is to this period of history that most of the Psalms are known to belong. The Kingdom of God is therefore closely identified in the Psalms with the kingdom of Israel. The facts of this kingdom are used as the framework upon which the Spirit of God spreads the vision of the larger Kingdom of God. The experiences of the existing kingdom serve as the canvas upon which is painted the glory of the coming Kingdom. Zion is a type of the City of God. David and his successors are types of the Messianic King. Victories over surrounding nations forecast the glorious and universal triumph of the Messianic order. By symbol, by type, and by explicit statement we finally arrive at a portrayal of the glorious consummation toward which all things move, which, even in these days of grace, no human reasoning could forecast and which alone "He Who knoweth the mind of the Spirit" could reveal.

A study of the vision of God's world-wide Kingdom as portrayed in the Psalms reveals:

1. *First, the wonderful clearness with which that great goal is portrayed.* We are told of its world-wide extent: "Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Ps. ii. 8). We learn about its annihilation of racial discrimination: "Jehovah will count, when He writeth up the peoples, This one was born there" (Ps. lxxxvii. 6). We are taught the perpetuity of the Kingdom: "Thy Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom" (Ps. cxlv. 13). We know the divine character of the Kingdom's King: "I will tell of the decree: Jehovah said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee" (Ps. ii. 7). We see His just rule: "He will judge the world in righteousness" (Ps. ix. 8). We understand the peaceful character of His reign: "Come, behold the work of Jehovah. . . . He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth" (Ps. xlv. 8, 9). We hear of mercy and goodness in His Kingdom: "Jehovah

beholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that are bowed down (Ps. cxlv. 14. *cf.* 13). We anticipate the laborious ushering in of the Kingdom: "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him" (Ps. cxxvi. 6). We are informed as to the volunteer service which shall be rendered: "Thy people offer themselves willingly in the day of Thy power, in holy array" (Ps. cx. 3). These are but a few of a large number of striking references to the Kingdom which help to paint for us a vivid prophetic picture of what, even yet, lies in the future, but for which the great missionary enterprise labors. In no less than fifty-one Psalms do we trace such clear and explicit references to the Kingdom of God.

2. *We note, second, that the line of approach to this thought of the Kingdom of God is chiefly, if not always, from the Godward side.* Sometimes the contemplation of the power of God is the avenue along which the Psalmist's thought travels, and he sees that power moving majestically forward until it has established God's sovereignty throughout the world: "Say unto God, How terrible are Thy works! Through the greatness of Thy power shall Thine enemies submit themselves unto Thee" (Ps. lxvi. 3). Sometimes it is a soul-sweeping admiration for the holiness and goodness of God which is used of the Spirit to open up the vision of a world-wide recognition of the beauty of the divine character: "In the day of my trouble I will call upon Thee; for Thou wilt answer me. There is none like unto Thee among the gods, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto Thy works. All nations whom Thou hast made shall come and worship before Thee, O Lord; and they shall glorify Thy name" (Ps. lxxxvi. 7-9). In most instances, the thought of the establishment of the Kingdom of God is approached from the Godward side, rather than from the side of man and his needs.

3. *We note, third, a twofold method of extending and establishing the Kingdom: force and persuasion.* In some Psalms one or the other of these methods stands out prominently; in other

Psalms both are exhibited in operation. "Ask of Me and I will give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Ps. ii. 8, 9). Here power is clearly in operation, overcoming all opposition. In Ps. lxxvii. 4 we have suasion alone—a glad and willing recognition on the part of all the earth of God's goodness and beneficence: "O let all the nations be glad and sing for joy: for Thou shalt judge the peoples with equity and govern the nations upon earth."

Every student of history, and especially of missions, will recognize at once the faithfulness to fact and experience in this portrayal of the double method by which God's Kingdom is ushered in. Force on the one hand: sometimes in wars of fearful magnitude—a Sepoy mutiny, a Mahdi rebellion, a Russo-Japanese war—sometimes in plagues and epidemics, floods and famines, as repeatedly in China and India. On the other hand, there is suasion. Here the redeemed of God, "ambassadors for Christ," persuade men. Although "the fulness of the times" has shed clearer light on the eternal purposes of God, and although Paul speaks of his "understanding in the mystery of Christ; which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto His holy Apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to wit, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Eph. iii. 4-6), yet even twenty-eight centuries ago the Psalmist grasped the thought that he to whom the goodness of God has been revealed ought to be the witness, the herald, the messenger, through whom that knowledge shall be imparted to others: "Thy saints shall bless Thee. They shall speak of the glory of Thy Kingdom and talk of Thy power; to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glory of the majesty of His kingdom" (Ps. cxlv. 10-12).

And now we have gone far enough to see that the Psalms are thoroughly imbued with the spirit of missions. Deep down in

their fundamental conception of the creation of the universe, and of the moral world, the Psalms have laid a solid foundation for the missionary idea, while again and again, with irrepressible force, the vision of a subdued and cleansed and responsive world bursts upon view. What is the practical application of all this? It is just this: To sing these missionary songs and not to live them is the rankest inconsistency. To shout "Earth's utmost bounds shall hear and turn," and not to turn a hand to send forth those who shall make them hear, is mere mockery. Better put away these noble songs unsung than to become of those who "with their lips do honor" God, but have removed their hearts far from Him, for in thus singing them we do but call down judgment upon ourselves. But if, with that clearness of vision concerning God's will for the world which these Spirit-inspired Psalms impart, we go forth to realize that will of God in the world, consecrating to this end prayer and possessions and life, then "the beauty of the Lord our God shall be upon us" and He shall make our Church to be "a praise in the earth."

## THE PSALMS AND THE YOUNG

BY THE REV. A. R. PAUL, CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA

**T**HE Church that cannot propagate itself among its own people by gathering into its membership a large proportion, at least, of the children of its own families is not only destined to extinction, but deserves this doom. Realizing this, every live Church, every aggressive denomination of Christians, has grappled, with varying degrees of intelligence and faithfulness, with the problem of its Young People, viz., how to interest and hold them during the years of childhood, how to influence their youthful minds aright, and win their hearts and lives for Christ and the Church. Not one of all the pressing problems that confront the Church surpasses this in importance. And it is a recognized fact that in its solution the music of the Church holds a place second to no other agency. A love of music is well-nigh universal. Whether child or adult, whether educated or ignorant, the person who does not enjoy music, and who is not susceptible to its soothing or inspiring influence, has something about him that is decidedly abnormal. He is so rare a specimen that, for all practical purposes, he may safely be eliminated from any problem the Church has to solve. The knowledge of this fact, as well as divine appointment, accounts for the prominent place that has always been accorded music in the service of the Church. Multitudes of people are attracted and held by the music who do not at first care very much for any other part of the service. Particularly is this true of young people. They like to hear singing. More important still, they like to sing. And they do sing, for there is no class of music so widely known as Church music. And so it has come about



that this part of the service is recognized as the standard and effective agency for interesting and holding young people during that restless, unsettled period incident to adolescence, until their hearts can be won for the Master and their feet planted firmly on the Rock of Ages.

Now, in this work of interesting and holding the youth many seem to think the Psalm-singing Churches labor under the disadvantage of a self-imposed handicap. Their exclusive use of the Psalms in the service of praise, in the opinion of many, renders that service less attractive to young people than is the service in other Churches, and consequently less effective in holding them. It is to be feared that some among the membership of our own and other Psalm-singing Churches share in this opinion, or at least tacitly admit that it has weight. It shall be the province of this paper to show what ground, if any, there may be for this opinion or admission.

In the service of song two things are required—Words and Music, Matter and Melody, poetical compositions of a religious nature and musical compositions adapted to their rendition. That the service may be the best possible, *i. e.*, the most acceptable to God and the most attractive, helpful, and inspiring to men, the words must be approved by Him, the music must be perfectly suited to them in every way, and the rendition must be “with the spirit and with the understanding also.” Now, what has the United Presbyterian Church with which to meet these conditions? I answer:

I. She has a hymn-book that in point of content, or matter of praise, is absolutely incomparable.

1. This is true by reason of its perfect fidelity to the truth. The teaching power of song is all too frequently underestimated, and this in spite of the fact that thoughtful men have often called attention to its potency in this respect. The man who said “Let me write the songs of a nation, and I care not who may make its laws,” expressed a profound truth, even if he did indulge in hyperbole. And if it be true that patriotic songs are possessed

of such vast educational value, much more true is it of religious songs—those words and melodies that are sung, not on the occasional holiday, but by millions every Sabbath, and that rise from thousands of family altars every day. The sentiment of these songs, whether truth or error, will be imbibed unconsciously by the singers, and will make an indelible impression upon them. Particularly is this true of the young, whose minds are plastic and receptive in the highest degree. How important it is, then, not only for the honor of God, but for the moral and spiritual welfare of our young people, that the songs which they sing in the services of the Church shall be free from any taint of error. And no hymn-book on earth can lay successful claim to absolute freedom from error except the divinely inspired Psalter. Examine any other manual of praise, and you will find that it puts into the mouths of those who would worship God by its use some sentiments peculiar to the denomination whose imprint it bears. There are Unitarian hymns and Baptist hymns and Arminian hymns and Calvinistic hymns. And while no man can prove conclusively which is right, any man can prove that some of them must be wrong, for they cannot all be right.

Let a text-book of history or of science be introduced into the public schools. It may be attractive in style, faultless in diction, arranged according to the most approved principles of pedagogy, and it may have been in use for many years with apparently satisfactory results. But let someone discover and prove it in error on one or two points, with regard to one or two of its statements, and how long will it be until it is discarded? And shall we be more alert to guard our children against error in science than in religion? Is the truth about God's creation more important than the truth about God Himself? Shall a text-book that teaches error about His character and grace be retained, while a text-book that teaches error about His providence and handiwork is instantly rejected? In a word, shall the religious education of our children be less carefully supervised than their intellectual training? I insist, with charity, and yet with confidence, that

every Church which employs in its service of praise any hymn-book other than the divine Psalter is either actually making that mistake or running a perilous risk of making it. If the Bible be the Word of God, and the Psalms a part of it, then we have a hymn-book that is absolutely incomparable in its fidelity to the truth. And if there be any educational value in the songs that we sing in religious service, then we are equipped as no hymn-singing denomination is for reaching and training the young; we have a praise-book that sings the truth, and nothing but the truth, into the hearts of the children.

2. But it is also incomparable in its attractiveness. I speak now of its thought and expression, the truth it contains, and the literary form in which that truth is cast. There is no other hymn-book in existence that is so attractive to everybody, old and young alike, as the Book of Psalms. This statement may seem strange to some, but it is entirely capable of proof. Religious truth, especially that of a devotional nature, is not, as a general thing, very attractive to the youthful unregenerate mind. But of all the books exclusively religious and devotional, the Book of Psalms has the greatest attraction for such minds. For every young Christian it possesses a charm that is irresistible, and that inspires in his heart a love for itself that no other book, not even of the Bible, awakens. It is the attraction of truth clothed in faultless diction. If the judgment of practically all the religious scholars of every age counts for anything, the Psalter is a book of devotional truth and beauty unequalled in all literature, the peculiar treasure and gem of the sacred Canon. And this is realized not only by those of literary taste and education, but by those so illiterate as to be able to do little more than read intelligently. It is safe to assume that the ordinary child knows more selections from the Book of Psalms than from any other Book of the Bible. The person who knows and cares little about the sacred volume, if asked to read from it, will turn more frequently to the Book of Psalms than to any other portion. Why? Either because he is more familiar with it, or because the literary style

is so pure and attractive. And the one whose eyes have been opened to the beauties of divine truth, and whose heart has been touched with the love of it, fairly revels in the Book of Psalms. It is to him what it was to Luther—his “little Bible.” He pores over it as he does over no other portion of the Word. Any young Christian of any denomination who wants stimulus for his religious life will turn to this divine hymnal twenty times where he turns to any human hymnal once. What does all this mean? Does it not prove that the inspired Psalter is more attractive to everybody, old and young, Christian and non-Christian, than any other existing hymn-book? As to the matter of our praise-book, then, the Psalm-singing Churches are equipped as no other Churches are for drawing and holding people, and young people, by the service of song.

3. Our inspired hymn-book is also incomparable in its helpfulness. It is always easy to attract young people to the services of the Church if one has no scruples as to method. But nothing worth while has been accomplished, if, having drawn them there, they are given nothing really helpful. You may sing a catchy melody into their minds without affecting their hearts. You may haunt them with the rhythm and jingle of sentimental poetry, but you have not given them much with which to build up a staunch Christian character. But when you sing the songs of the Psalter into their minds, you have put, as one has said, the roar of Lebanon into their souls, and, come what will in after life, that mighty melody will never cease to reverberate in the inmost chambers of the heart. Oh, the moral characters that have been stiffened and made strong by the stately music of the Psalter! Oh, the prodigals that have come back from the far country because they could never get away from the haunting strains of David's harp! Oh, the death-beds that have been made beautiful, and the dark valleys that have been illumined, by the memory of the “Shepherd Psalm” as it came echoing back from the long ago—from the innocent days of childhood, when a mother crooned it softly to the rhythm of a swaying cradle! Our

inspired hymnal has afforded infinitely more such help than all the praise manuals of men.

II. And now, being thus incomparably equipped as to the Matter of Praise, what have the Psalm-singing Churches, especially our own, in the way of Melody, musical compositions suited to our matchless songs, so as to meet present conditions and make our service of praise not only acceptable to God, but attractive, helpful, and inspiring to young people? Let me say frankly that if we have failed to reach and hold and win the young, it has been because we were weak at this point. Necessarily this is so, because this only is our part. The matter has been furnished us; it is divine, and consequently perfect. The metrical arrangements and the musical adaptations are our own, and, consequently, more or less imperfect—rather more, I fear, than less. Moreover, the rendition of these songs, following upon our metrical arrangements and musical adaptations, is our own; and here there always has been, and still is, a good deal left to be desired. If we have failed, then, I repeat, it has been with our part of the song-service.

But, as compared with other Churches, I do not admit for a moment that we have failed in reaching and winning the young. I believe that fully as large a proportion of the children of Psalm-singing Churches are gathered into their membership as any other Church can show. I have often heard ministers of other denominations say, "The United Presbyterians hold their young people better than we do." If this is not true, it ought to be. We have the advantage of them in that we have a perfect manual of praise. And if we have not been decidedly more successful than other Churches in reaching and holding the young, it is only because we have failed in our part of the service. And the points at which we have failed are not far to seek.

*First.* We clung too long, with all the tenacity of unreasoning prejudice, to very defective metrical versions. This is happily now a thing of the past. We are satisfied now, not with a good, but only with the best, version obtainable. The new joint

version of the Psalms attests this fact. It is to be hoped and expected that the eminent men who made this version have indeed succeeded in "combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words."

*Second.* We have been satisfied with, and have even insisted upon, a very inferior musical equipment. This, indeed, has been a heavy handicap in the past. We have discouraged individual excellence in singing, we have denied the use of helpful and even essential supports to the voice, and we have lazily allowed many inharmonious melodies and unhappily wedded words and music to cumber our praise-books. But all this, too, is largely a thing of the past. If, with our matchless songs suitably versified, and with our modern musical equipment, we are not able to reach and hold and win the young, it will be because of a tactless, unintelligent, unsanctified use, or rather misuse, of both songs and music.

## THE PSALMS AND THE YOUNG

BY THE REV. W. W. LAWRENCE, BELLEVUE, PA.

**T**HE evidence which authenticates revelation is not demonstrative but always moral. The contents of the Psalms are the forceful argument and masterful appeal for their use in praise. The Church cannot consecrate them. At Gettysburg, when a portion of the battlefield was dedicated as a national cemetery, Lincoln said, "We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it far above our power to add or detract. It is for us the living to be consecrated to the great task remaining before us, and from these honored dead to take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion." The Psalms are God's songs, gleaned through a thousand years, vindicated gloriously in the heart struggles of ten thousand saints, and hallowed by the heroic victories of the martyr throng. The Psalter hymns consecrate the young to their use in praise, and in their presence it is ours to dedicate ourselves and our children to the cause they uphold.

The young move through this elusive, beautiful, half-veiled world with eager feet, uncertain of themselves, of their future, of their fortune, and unformed in thought and spiritual power. All things are to be achieved, the goals are far distant, the way unknown. "There is the elation of the first setting out, the freshness of the early day, the beauty of the flowers still sweet with the dews and fragrance of the night, the consciousness of strength unused, the mysterious invitation of the future, but there are also the sense of detachment from all things which surround one, the feeling of unreality which comes and goes and makes

youth at times all action, at times all dreams." The adjustment of this bundle of contradictions and possibilities to the work of life, and to the realities ever within the ken of the soul, is accomplished in a large measure by the spirit-craft of the Psalms. The songs of God clear the vision, deepen the consciousness of life behind the form, and set the spiritual in the cloud keeping watch above its own. Deprive youth of this divine heritage, and it must go forth into the world poor in heavenly grace.

Give the Psalter songs a chance, and God's way will be vindicated. Present the literary merits of the Bible hymns, crystallize the Hebrew parallelism into choicest English verse, unfold the spiritual import in some systematic, sympathetic way, ingrain the moral constitution by memorization, interpret the pictures of oriental life psalmfully, wed these songs to music that is joyous, simple, stately, reverent, soulful, and the Master Builder will fashion the living stones of His palace into marvelous beauty. At this point affirmation and prophecy are answered by facts, as the Face in Franconia Notch answers through the centuries the humors of the sky.

The young appreciate the songs of God. Objections to the use of the old Psalter hymns are voiced by the critic of mature years in the interests of controversy, denominational narrowness, false culture, or hypercriticism and interpretation. In the Bible schools where the Psalms are used there is progress, not in spite of the songs, but through their spiritual attractiveness. In comparison with other great conventions the assemblies of Psalm-singers do not suffer. In spite of a Mephibosheth versification the Psalms hold their own in the sanctuary. With a more perfect versification, with music in harmony with their lofty spiritual teaching, with adaptations suited to the range of voice, the age, and culture of the young, they will become a very power of God unto salvation.

I. *The Psalms appeal to the young:*

i. Through the place they imperiously accord youth in home and sanctuary. The teachings of Jesus elevate childhood to its



rightful place in the Kingdom; so these songs set open unto the young the everlasting gates. "Except ye become as little children" is the New Testament charter for the "immortal brightnesses." The Master's reverence for the children, the new spirit of love commended, and His simple teaching defend the rights of childhood for all time without any special legislation. The spirit of the little child stands guard by the wicket gate, and no man dare close the service upon any child, although there be no special law. So the spirit of the Psalter songs, their sweet tenderness toward the young, the heart teaching concerning the children of Zion, fend the young in their spiritual privileges. "Come ye children" is a germinal Psalter exhortation from which Christ plucks the ripe fruitage of the great fending invitation, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me."

2. Through their virility—the virility of the songs of the early ages. Life was real, earnest, exuberant, and men grappled with its problems at first hand, when these poets touched the lyre. In pioneer times men and women feel intensely, and dare express their emotions. In the songs of such stirring days you get the red blood of the heart. The sentiments of the writer "reach the Emperor." Out of the testing times come the great enduring poems. False culture refines, sips, daintily handles, looks to the adornment, counts vulgar any show of feeling, and shrinks from the vigorous thought of men-thinkers whose words throb with feeling and conviction. Youth—exultant with life, hot with passion, a pioneer with the age spirit ill-adjusted—hears the far cry of the old songs, and greets them with a loving welcome. There is an appeal in the Psalms which is not heard in any modern song, where culture has concealed artistically all severe views of sin, and vivid representations of God, and the deep desires of awakening life.

3. Through their historical presentation of the truth. Nothing appeals like life, and in life that which is heroic. A biography easily supplants a catechism. History will displace dogmatics. The personal, the concrete, the objective, the heroic, wins the

first attention, and leaves the deeper impression. The footprints which men have left in the cooling rock measure the stride of the advancing generation. The Athenian stirred the populace by an appeal to the illustrious dead. When the Apostle would fasten his converts to the truth, he exclaims, "Be ye imitators of me." The great Teacher enunciated the fundamental law of education when He gave the gospel call, "Follow Me." The Psalms reach down through the ages to the Christ; they make appeal through fact and life, illustrating the truth in heroic lives, and writing large in history the message of the skies.

4. Through their imaginative, familiar, natural symbolism. Youth is full of poetry, and lives in a wonderland. Truth is thin veiled in fact, and taught in "likes." Nature is understood instinctively. So the sounds and sights of nature fill the Lord's song-book. The sunlight crowns the mountains, and in the valley crouch the shadows. The poetical elements of the universe are scattered flower-like in the broad acres. The great lessons of sorrow and sacrifice, of good and evil, of prosperity and adversity, are unfolded in a symbolism that is divine—facts of life thin veil the mysteries which with open face we behold in the life and teaching of the Man of Nazareth. No version has succeeded in freezing these poetic elements out of the Book. Down through the secret door of the imagination, which God has left ajar for His entrance into the soul of man, He pours the wealth of His thought and love into the hearts of the children, and they understand, for only the abstract is the unfamiliar.

5. Through their matchless delineation of the Father in Heaven. Sweet to the taste unspoiled is common fare. Manna is loathed by those Israelites who remember the leeks and onions of Egypt. They had a taste. For the young, God is like the sunlight and the dew unto the flowers. To the uncorrupted soul the tenderness and love revealed in the common round, and in the supply of the daily need, are revelations of His tender grace. In the morning-time His mercy provides with strength; at the noon hour His hand provides the daily bread; in the day of

disaster a great compassion envelops the heart; in sin a great forgiveness restores; and always His sleepless eye is watching in great love. When we mark His care for the young lions, and His overplus of care for the children of men, we whisper, "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." When we count our mercies under the direction of the sweet singer of Israel, considering our sin, and the wonder of divine patience, we sing, "Full of compassion, and of great mercy," and feel the power of the truth. This is the mightiest appeal possible—Saviourhood through Sovereignty and Fatherhood. This is the appeal of the Psalter hymns to the young.

II. *The Macedonian in the young appeals for the Psalms.*

1. They preserve the infinity and personality of Jehovah-Jesus. Only thus is God set before the soul in His full glory. These foci set the life revolving in its perfect ellipse—intellectual and spiritual. "No sacred book of any nation has solved this fundamental problem of all religions, how to preserve at the same time the infinity and personality of God, as has the Psalter. The Psalmist is not afraid of anthropomorphisms, but no reader of the Psalms finds his idea of the divine majesty lowered or the divine glory dimmed. The Rabbi disdains them, the Alexandrine philosopher explains them away, the hyper-critic finds only mythology in them; the wise and devout man knows that nowhere else, except in the word of Jesus of Nazareth, is he brought so directly into the presence of the living God, as inexpressibly lofty and pure as He is near and gracious." The Psalms are the touches of the divine hand as God fashions the heart aright. As we close the book of the Master's teaching, so we close the Psalter, saying, Our Father in Heaven.

2. They inspire with a holy zeal for righteousness. God is righteous, and loves righteousness—are the deep undertones of the inspired songs. Here we find a foundation for some good, thoroughgoing theory of the atonement. Other foundation can no man lay for a successful life. Here is begotten that power of civilization which is missing even in the day of Grecian

splendor—spiritual intensity revealed in moral earnestness. The facile and languid moral sense of our times ought to be electrified with the spirit of holiness breathing righteousness through the songs of the sanctuary. This sense of righteousness must be inlaid in the moral constitution of the young, or religious enterprise will fail, our civilization will disintegrate, and our children fail to come up to the help of God.

3. They overarch life and put a glory beyond the gates. In the Psalter song God is working. In our day we have a sort of *tertium quid* called providence, upon which we place the responsibility of events. Life is not bound about the feet of God. In the Psalms the covenant child is working with Him. Life has a sky line. There is a place to work. Life has an altitude. There is room to breathe. Life has power. We dare the impossible. Life has fellowship. We move under the spell of a great hope. The Greek speaks in his songs of life unending because he feels the thrill of living, is conscious of intellectual activity, longs for the touch of a hand that is still. Out of a life of service with God, inspired by fellowship with Jehovah, the singer of Israel beholds a path of life stretching to the right hand of the throne, plenteous mercies in store, goodness and mercy as twin angels following him, and the house of the Father, where he shall abide forever, awaiting him.

4. They fuse all passions and powers into praise, and set the children in the midst. Every act touches a harp string. Every emotion answers at the throne. The worshiper stands in the heart of a great company whose song is like the voice of many waters. Every power of the vast universe trembles with praise, for the breath of God fills it. Out of doubt, action, love, in home, nation, quiet oratory, and thronged sanctuary, in crescendo of praise rises the Hallelujah. The redeemed soul has come to its own. The morning stars sing together. Nature is new born from her curse and thunders her accompaniment. But the children's voices as sweetest chords in the great anthem lift the praise unto God. They have place of high honor. As the

Saviour took the little ones in His arms, saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of heaven," so the Psalter hymns gather young men and maidens, and children small, into the song of praise, sweeping their voices and hearts into the anthem, saying, Suffer the young to voice His inspired word, for of such is the kingdom of praise.

## THE LITERARY EXCELLENCE OF THE PSALMS

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WHEN Horace and Ovid are forgotten, and the dramas of Shakespeare are unread, the lyrics of the Shepherd-King will still command the admiration of poets and essayists and be hymned and harped for the æsthetic, as well as the moral, culture of humanity. The songs of Ossian are now unsung; Dante with his titanic imagery, Chaucer with his almost unpronounceable vernacular, are in the last lingering twilight of their once great fame. But in this majestic Psalter there are strains which cannot die, and which all the flying creeds that drift over the boundless desert of melody can never entomb.

There are no poems that carry us so far back into the religions of our race. You can hear in them the crackling of the martyr fires, the clang of sabers, and the rattle of spears in the fiercest and most terrible tumults of the ages. Their heroic stanzas are red with the bloodstains of the Scotch Covenanters. They have been scorched on crosses, gashed by guillotines, and flung into dungeons; they have gone through flood and fire and famine; yet here they are, scarred, battered, hacked by persecution and martyrdom, yet beautiful and vigorous as when first sung in desert wild or peopled city. Thousands of years ago, long before Babylonian captives hung their harps on the willows, they were sung by the gleaners among the vines when the vintage was red. The husbandman sung them at his plow when the plow was but a rude forked stick. They were blown upon the shepherd's reed as the flocks were led into succulent pastures. The greatest nations of the old world have risen; they have run their spectacular courses; they have erected their civilizations; they have builded their monuments; and they have passed away like

water that melts into the sand. But through all these multiplied civilizations and centuries the harp of David has never ceased to play.

Did you ever stop to think that when Homer was singing his immortal measures, in the days of the splendid culture of Greece, the Ninetieth Psalm was hoary with age? Five hundred years before the Greek bard penned his *Odyssey* or sang of Calypso's "sweet, reluctant, amorous delay," Moses was singing in a thrice loftier strain:

"Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place  
In all generations.  
Before the mountains were brought forth,  
Or ever Thou hadst formed the earth or the world,  
Even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God."

There is no harp like David's. But before the shepherd lad was born, before he with his charming minstrelsy exorcised the evil spirit of his king, his forefathers for six hundred years had been singing:

"A thousand years in Thy sight  
Are but as yesterday when it is past,  
And as a watch in the night."

But, furthermore, it has been conjectured that the Eighty-Eighth and the Eighty-Ninth Psalms were written, or at least sung, by Heman and Ethan, grandsons of Judah (*cf.* Clokey's "David's Harp in Song and Story," p. 24). If this be true, then these two Psalms are two hundred years older than Moses, or seven hundred years older than David, and are without doubt the oldest poems in the world. This carries us back to the time of Joseph in Egypt, far beyond the building of Troy, the deluge of Deucalion, the building of Thebes or of Sparta. They were sung one thousand years before Romulus builded his so-called "Eternal City" on the banks of the "Yellow Tiber."

But where are the Trojan annals now? Greece has passed away. The desert sands drift over Assyria's proudest monu-

ments. The mummy of Rameses lies stark under the curious gaze of a new civilization. Macedonia is as dead as Alexander the Great. But the old, old songs, where are they? Here, bless God, singing the truths that cannot die into the hearts of His children, and making luminous and rhythmic every valley of sorrow. Brethren, your religious poems bear the world's laurels without a competitor. You are in direct line of descent the legitimate heirs of the songs that came from God.

It is not the teaching, merely, of these wonderful poems that has given them such a lasting grip upon the affections of men. The poet Keats once said: "The poet must always see truth in the form of beauty." Truth is itself essentially beautiful, but it may not always appear in its robes of coronation. However beautiful, it may be so masked by inelegant diction as to make it appear grotesque and abnormally distorted. Even the most ennobling sentiment is ennobling to you and me only as it is clothed in diction and orderings of beauty which make it welcome at the door of our admiration. Here, then, in these Old Testament lyrics we have a literature that is unsurpassed. It has been the charm of all ages since men began to appreciate the beauties of poetic thought. It has appealed to hearts and intellects, to the noblest instincts and emotions of generations which have been slumbering in the dust of centuries. Here poets have reveled and essayists have found their happiest inspiration. The Psalms gave beauty to the literary genius of John Ruskin, who learned them at his mother's knee and wove their thoughts like threads of gold into the web of his splendid diction. The ruggedness of Thomas Carlyle, those angular, beetling, cliff-like sentences of his, towered mountain high above the literary levels, the silvery, stream-like measures, of other men, because his head and heart in earlier years were pillowed on the inspired and inspiring Hebrew Psalter. Many a poet has sung his way into immortality to the accompaniment of David's harp.

It is not the thought alone, but the language, the imagery, in which thought is clothed that makes its presence a delight. It



is this that gives the Psalms such an Eleazar's grip upon the hearts of men. Indeed this, the literary structure, is the one medium through which we discover their majesty and grandeur. The lens is not the heavens; but it is through the lens that we get our finest glimpse of the heavens. The thought and the language are coördinate, inter-related, mutually dependent, and what God hath joined the world has never been able to sever. It is, therefore, straining no point to say that the very literary setting of these age-old pastorals, these earliest of world-melodies, has much to do with the hold which they have upon the hearts of men. The Greeks, we are told, divided all poetry into three classes: the epic, the lyric, and the dramatic. They are all here.

The lyrical, the epical, the dramatical forms of poetic construction are nowhere more generously found than in the Psalter. The rich, harmonious balancing of thought, the beauty and splendor of parallelism, the orchestral and the antiphonal, the elegiac and the acrostic, the graceful, pendulum-vibration of rhythm, the stream-like placidity of measure, the sunburst and the thundergust of melody, are nowhere more matchlessly portrayed than here. They were born of no Icarian flight of fancy, yet no such magnificence of imagery is elsewhere to be found.

Are we looking for sublimity of thought? Let us sit for a moment under the widespreading metaphors of the One Hundred and Fourth Psalm and look up:

"Thou art clothed with honor and majesty.  
Thou coverest Thyself with light as with a garment."

Reading a little farther we see the Great Jehovah not only robing Himself in garments of everlasting light, but stretching out the sapphire curtains of the heavens, using the clouds as carriages, flying abroad, improvising wings out of the winds, and compelling forked lightnings to become His messengers and ministers.

Or take this:

“He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth;  
He toucheth the mountains, and they smoke.”

Never in such brevity of speech has more majestic utterance been made. The Great Jehovah lays His fingertips on the mountain tops, and the majestic and terrified peaks break into volcanic eruption and send their black volumes of smoke up into the very face of the Deity in recognition of His power. He casts one glance on the earth, and like a frightened thing it trembles, answering with an earthquake shudder the fierce glance of its Creator. And all this is described in two lines of fifteen words! Or pass over to the One Hundred and Fourteenth Psalm. The poet is there speaking of the going of Israel out of Egypt, and of the presence of God with His people, and this is the way he describes the impressions made on surrounding nature:

“The sea saw it and fled;  
Jordan was driven back.  
The mountains skipped like rams,  
And the little hills like sons of the flock.”

What a tumult is here caused by the very presence of Jehovah! There is sublimity of conception there. Then he addresses the sea, and the Jordan, the mountains, and the little hills, and he wants to know what is the meaning of all this tumult and confusion, and, without waiting for an answer, he cries:

“Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord,  
At the presence of the God of Jacob.”

Go back to the Nineteenth Psalm. What a majesty there is there! Who, gazing upon those fields of stars, could weave his thoughts into strophes more noble? What stately phrases the astronomer might there indite, telling of unthinkable spaces, of cycles of fire tracks where infinities of worlds race in orbits that bewilder. The poet looks and dreams in glowing hexameters. We praise the splendor of his rhythm and write his phrases

among the classics. But the Psalmist, God's anointed poet, casts one profound glance into those arcs of order, and there he sees—God! He beholds his Maker's features mirrored there as plainly as the astronomer beholds the face of a star. And this is what he says:

“The heavens declare the glory of God;  
And the firmament showeth His handiwork.”

In Psalm cxli. 3 the Psalmist asks God to set a watch before his mouth. Beautiful is the thought which suggests God's sentinel pacing back and forth before the door of the lips—the vigilant sentry of the Infinite guarding the heart's gate that no enemy goes in or out.

In Psalm xlii. we have the plaintive threnody of the Babylonian captive. And what can be more tenderly pathetic than this patriotic yearning for the old church where he used to worship, back on the Judean hills? Here is the touching metaphor in which he describes that longing:

“As the hart panteth after the water brooks,  
So panteth my soul after Thee, O God.”

And as they march sorrowfully away to the land of their captivity, the poet, with the strings of his lyre trailing in the dust, hears the dashing of the cascades in the defiles of the mountains. He hears the tumbling cataracts, and he cries:

“Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterfalls:  
All Thy waves and Thy billows have gone over me.”

What an artist's sketch that is! where he makes the very tumult of the mountain streams illustrate his own heart's pathos.

The One Hundred and Thirty-First Psalm has been called “the song of the singer who sobs himself to sleep in God's arms.” We have in it this pathetic figure—and remember that the Psalmist is in trouble, deep and sore, and that he cannot understand the purposes of God:

“Surely I have soothed and quieted my soul,  
Like a weaned child with his mother.”

Is not that beautiful? Since he cannot understand, he will not try to exercise himself with matters too great for him. He will just lie right down in God's compassionate bosom, soothed and quieted, knowing that it is all right.

Amid metaphors and allegories we might here revel delightedly for hours, so manifold, so diverse are they. Here, as nowhere else, we mount up on wings as eagles, we run and are not weary, we walk and are not faint. As for the language in which these measures are cast, there is no simpler, sweeter, loftier phraseology. The profoundest schoolmen here find the deep things of God and of the human heart expressed in words so simple and so clear that, like one of those little mirror lakes in our Western mountains, the whole heavens and uplifted earth are reflected there. The most learned have ever been the Psalter's most pronounced admirers; while from the beginning of the Book to the end of it there is scarcely a word used that the untaught may not understand. It is no small literary merit to have the thoughts of the Great God expressed in language so simple that a little child may grasp them. Are you looking for apostrophe? Turn to the One Hundred and Fourteenth Psalm:

“What aileth thee, O sea, that thou fleest?  
Thou Jordan, that thou turnest back?  
Ye mountains, that ye skip like rams?  
Ye little hills, like sons of the flock?”

Are you seeking acrostic measure? This constitutes one of the important literary features of the Psalms, as it was one of the leading characteristics of Hebrew poetry. Of this character we might mention such Psalms as the Twenty-Fifth, Thirty-Seventh, One Hundred and Eleventh, One Hundred and Twelfth, One Hundred and Forty-Fifth, etc. Of course the alphabetic artifice entirely disappears in the English translation. But the

most remarkable of all the Psalms from an acrostic point of view is the One Hundred and Nineteenth, a Psalm which Dr. Barton has pronounced "one of the finest works of art in existence." This long composition has eight consecutive verses beginning with each Hebrew letter, and every verse but two contains some allusion to the law of God. That means that the words "law," "statute," "ordinance," "precept," or some synonym, are found one hundred and seventy-four times in the one hundred and seventy-six verses. Yet the literary structure is such that it does not grow monotonous.

Another notable characteristic of the Psalter is its parallelism, that is, where the thought of one line is carried over into the next and repeated with some variation or balanced by similar antithetical thought. "The effect of this simple artifice," says Dr. Van Dyke, "is singularly pleasant and powerful. It is the rise and fall of the fountain, the ebb and flow of the tide, the tone and undertone of the chiming bell. The twofold utterance seems to bear the thought onward like the wings of a bird. A German writer compares it very exquisitely to 'the heaving and sinking of a troubled heart.'" A fine illustration of this parallelism is found in the Ninety-Third Psalm:

"The floods have lifted up, O Jehovah,  
The floods have lifted up their voice;  
The floods lift up their waves."

Here the thought of the first line is carried over into the second, and out of the second into the third. Psalm xcvi. 7 gives us another three-line parallelism:

"Give unto Jehovah, ye kindreds of the people,  
Give unto Jehovah glory and strength;  
Give unto Jehovah the glory due unto His name."

The Psalms are replete with responsive, or antiphonal, measures—a kind of music in which the ancient Hebrews evidently

very much delighted. We have a fine example of this in the Twenty-Fourth Psalm, which Barton calls one of the noblest numbers in the Psalter; also the Ninth, the One Hundred and Fourth, the One Hundred and Eighteenth, and others. But possibly the finest in the entire Psalter is the One Hundred and Thirty-Sixth, where each verse ends in the beautiful refrain: "For His loving kindness endureth forever."

As a thread of gold these classic numbers run through all the lengthened web of melody since God has had a Church in this world. Poets have loved them. Song-writers have risen above the cloudland of the commonplace and have found the sapphire, amethyst, and blazing jasper of another world beneath their feet. Lord Byron grew up in the atmosphere of a Scriptural psalmody. In childhood his godly nurse taught him many of these splendid poems. When he grew older he wrote a paraphrase on the Fifty-Fifth Psalm. When he came to the sixth verse he said:

"O that to me the wings were given  
Which bear the turtle to her nest;  
Then would I cleave the vault of heaven  
To flee away and be at rest."

He employed his poetic genius in giving us that most beautiful rendering of the One Hundred and Thirty-Seventh Psalm, beginning:

"In the valley of waters we wept o'er the day  
When the host of the stranger made Salem his prey;  
And our head on our bosom all droopingly lay,  
And our hearts were so full of the land far away."

Addison paraphrased the Nineteenth Psalm and gave us those oft-quoted lines:

"The spacious firmament on high,  
With all the blue, ethereal sky  
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,  
Their Great Original proclaim."

Burns sang of them in his "Cotter's Saturday Night," where, after the supper hour,

"They chant their artless notes in simple guise;  
They time their hearts, by far the noblest aim;  
Perhaps Dundee's wild, warbling measures rise,  
Or plaintive Martyr's, worthy o' the name."

Matthew Arnold touched his poetic lyre in this reference to Psalm xlix. 7:

"From David's lips this word did roll,  
'Tis true and living yet:  
No man can save his brother's soul,  
Nor pay his brother's debt."

Mrs. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, in that beautiful poem of hers entitled "The Sleep," gives us this allusion to Psalm cxxvii. 2—"For so He giveth unto His beloved sleep":

"Of all the thoughts of God that are  
Borne unto souls afar  
Along the Psalmist's music deep,  
Now tell me if that any is  
For gift or grace surpassing this:  
'He giveth His beloved sleep'?"

Shakespeare was nurtured in childhood on this "marrow of lions," and in later years drew largely upon the Bible for his loftiest thoughts and noblest aspirations. We have found in his writings twenty-five distinct references to the Psalms, and there may be scores of others. Where did he find that rare thought, which Hallam has pronounced the most sublime in all his works:

"Look how the floor of heaven  
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:  
There's not the slightest orb which thou behold'st  
But in its motion like an angel sings"?

Where did he get that idea? He found it a pure, unalloyed nugget in Psalm xix. 1, 3:

“The heavens declare the glory of God,  
And the firmament showeth His handiwork.  
There is no speech nor language  
Where their voice is not heard.”

David, in Psalm xxii. 12, 13, says:

“Strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round,  
They gape upon me with their mouth,  
As a ravening and a roaring lion.”

Shakespeare borrows this thought in “Antony and Cleopatra,” where he makes Antony cry:

“O that I were  
Upon the hill of Bashan, to outroar  
The horned herd.”

Longfellow, in the “Courtship of Miles Standish,” speaks of Ainsworth’s version with its “rough-hewn, angular notes, like stones in the walls of a churchyard,” and tells us that rugged old John Alden

“Heard, as he drew near the door, the musical voice of Priscilla,  
Singing the Hundredth Psalm, the grand old Puritan anthem,  
Music that Luther sang to the sacred words of the Psalmist,  
Full of the breath of the Lord, consoling and comforting many.”

Fitz-Greene Halleck loved the Psalms, and has given us that charming version of the One Hundred and Thirty-Seventh Psalm, beginning:

“We sat us down and wept  
Where Babel’s waters slept,  
And we thought of home and Zion like a long-gone, happy dream.  
We hung our harps in air  
On the willow boughs, which there,  
Gloomy as round a sepulcher, were drooping o’er the stream.”



The finest classics of antiquity, as another has said, were written in heroic hexameter. It is one of the most beautiful and graceful forms for the expression of poetic thought. In Longfellow's "Evangeline" there is a beautiful example of this measure:

"This is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the hemlocks,  
Bearded in moss, and in garments green, indistinct in the twilight,  
Stand like Druids of eld, with voices sad and prophetic."

But ages before our sweet American poet was born, or the inhabitants of the pleasant village of Grand Pré were

"Scattered like dust and leaves, when the mighty blasts of October  
Seize them, and whirl them aloft, and sprinkle them far o'er the ocean,"

ages before the masters of song immortalized the literature of a classic age, David used the same heroic hexameters and transmitted them as a legacy to the culture and glory of all succeeding time. Here is the same measure in the Nineteenth Psalm:

"The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul;  
The testimony of Jehovah is sure, making wise the simple.  
The precepts of Jehovah are right, rejoicing the heart;  
The commandment of Jehovah is pure, enlightening the eyes.  
The fear of Jehovah is clean, enduring forever;  
The judgments of Jehovah are true and righteous altogether."

Do you want a song of liberty, something that antedates, and will outlive, your "Marseillaise," your "God Save the King," or your "Star-Spangled Banner"? They are here as plentiful as dreams of liberty in the heart of a bondsman. Here are the last songs the Pilgrim Fathers sang as they bade farewell to their fatherland. Here are the first songs they sang on the coast of granite-ribbed New England. Freedom's oldest lyrics were the first that were sung on Plymouth Rock:

"God is our refuge and our strength,  
In straits a present aid;  
And therefore, though the earth remove,  
We will not be afraid."

Is it a song of national security that you desire?

“They in the Lord that firmly trust  
 Shall be like Zion hill;  
 Which at no time can be removed,  
 But standeth ever still.”

The strains of these national airs have never been excelled. There are no lyrics like them, none with such warm oriental, such rich tropical, imagery. At times their music is like the flute notes of the shepherds among the hills; again it is the martial strains as their hosts go out to battle. We see the still waters where the flocks bend to drink, and we hear the sound of many waters, like the mighty breakers of the sea. The brackish rills of Engedi are here, and also the Red Sea billows cleft with the cimeter of the east wind. We see the swollen Jordan tumbling back on itself, and the far-off Babylonian waters gliding beneath pendant harps which will not respond to the Lord's songs in a strange land. We see here the lash of the taskmaster, and we hear the cry of the bond-slave. We see the gushing of miraculous waters in inhospitable wildernesses, and hear the detonations of Sinai's thunderings, and the wailing of the serpent-bitten in the deserts. We hear, on the marbled heights of Zion, the crashing of tremendous orchestras and the harmonic thunders of four thousand trained musicians. We see, as in a gallery of ancient worthies, the faces of Moses, and Asaph, and Heman, and Ethan, and David, and Solomon, and the sons of Korah—song-writers, musical composers, precursors, and teachers, and the faces of prophets, and priests, and kings, and shepherds, and vine-dressers, and warriors. We see the Judean valleys and hill-slopes where the flocks lie in the green pastures and the purpled hills are vocal with the songs of the vintage. We see the doorkeepers in the house of God and the swallows nesting beneath the eaves. We see the fire that burneth the forest and the flame that setteth the mountains on fire. One moment we are down in the valley of the shadow of

death, another swing of the song-pendulum, and we are at rest in the house of God forever.

Where are there so many and so diverse emotions stirred into activity as here? Here are the prophecies and hopes, the loftiest and holiest heart-yearnings of a great nation set to music and sung into the ears of all future ages. Here are the glories and humiliations of an approaching Saviour uttered in dark sayings upon the harp. Here are the wailings of the broken in heart, the sin-smitten, the tempted, the tried, the crushed, the despairing, the overwhelmed, who in their utter desolation and chaos of soul cry:

“Shall Thy wonders be known in the dark?  
And Thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?”

There is no tryst that my soul longs for but I find here. There are no deeps in my pain of heart but God's hand reaches right out of this Psalter and drops His plummet far beyond the shallows of my finite thinking. For the wailings of the pain-rent, whose hearts are torn with the consciousness of sin, here, in these remedial elegies, God gives His anæsthesia. Out of every valley there rise the tableland of His mercy and the peaks of song where the beams of His love never fade. And though the valleys all be desert, with only Marah's unsweetened waters there, yet on the tops of the mountains there is abundance of peace, and the glory of His presence waves like Lebanon.

There is no book of poems so poetical; there is no imagery so grand; there is no pathos so deep; there is no literature so ennobling; there is no wisdom so profound; there is no harmony so enrapturing; there is no place where the noblest measures clasp hands with themes so exalting, and lead us spellbound to the coast line of the Infinite, and tell us just to stand there, be still, think a while, look up and let the soul grow. It gives suggestions innumerable as the sand that is by the seashore; it points to infinities where the vision fails, and tells us to follow the trail if we can. And so I take God at His word, and

I climb as high as He gives me strength; and I look as far as my poor vision reaches; and as I stand there dazed in the infinity of what is, and what is to be, bewildered with broken visions, and arcs, and skylines of things indefinite to my mortality, of imperfectly understood revelations, of sapphire truths and amethystine hopes which lie in uplifted ranges far beyond the trail of my exploration—unscalable Sierras of dimly comprehended glories and majesties, I hear the choirs of the land invisible. Their melody is wafted through the gates of pearl and over the crags; the music of the throne-land is in my ears; and the songs that I hear are the lyrics we are singing, the old, old songs which bore the Hebrew hopes to the gates of gold, and strengthened our Saviour's heart in the shadow of the cross—God's songs, the songs of the redeemed, the songs of the covenant, thine and mine and those of the Church triumphant for evermore.

## THE LITERARY EXCELLENCE OF THE PSALMS

BY THE REV. J. D. BARR, NEW WILMINGTON, PA.

PROFESSOR JAMES ROBERTSON, in his "Poetry and Religion of Israel," quotes a friend as saying, in view of the controversial character of the modern treatment of the Psalms, "The Psalms will take care of themselves." With these words every lover of the Psalms will agree. The Psalms have taken care of themselves. It would be strange did they not continue to do so. They will never die. So long as human nature is what it is, devout souls will, like Luther, turn to them as their "little Bible." Out of the Psalms, as a treasure-house, scribes instructed unto the kingdom of heaven will continue to bring things new and old. This persistence of the Psalms as devotional literature is very significant. It reminds one of the persistence in history of the Bethlehem Babe. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. But He outgrew the manger. He became the world's Saviour. To-day He obtrudes on the world's thought. So the Psalms have outgrown the swaddling bands of their Jewish setting. Long, long ago the human soul capitulated to their music. Like the speech of Moses, their doctrine has dropped as the rain, and their speech has distilled as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb of liturgy, and as showers upon the grass of devotional literature. As Jesus is the Rock of the Ages, the Psalms have come to be the Songs of the Ages. It is as Professor Moulton puts it in his Modern Reader's Bible: "The change from Judaism to Christianity is immense, but it is a change that has had no influence on the Book of Psalms. The modern Christian turns to it as naturally as the ancient Hebrew. It is safe to predict that, however much mankind may alter the articles of its belief, the

Hebrew Psalms will not cease to furnish matter for liturgy and stimulus to private devotion." So also the skeptic Renan said, "They are the eternal poetry of the soul."

But let us come more immediately to the purpose of this paper. It is not to enlarge upon this persisting quality in the Psalms, but to account for it, and to do so from one point only—the literary. It will not be claimed that the Psalms live just because of literary excellence. Such a claim could not be supported. Poetry is much more than literary excellence. No poetry, not even of the Bible, would appeal to us did it build its claim on mere superior literary features. Dress is not the man; but it proclaims the man. So all that will be claimed here will be that the Hebrew Psalter does possess literary excellence, and that our love for it is not independent of this excellence. To use Solomon's simile of the fair woman without discretion, the ring of devotional gold in the Psalm is not set in the swine's snout of a poor literary form.

In discussing the literary excellence of the Psalms, let us begin with their form. It is true that to begin here will be like stopping in the vestibule of the Psalm temple. But let us stop here a while. In looking at their form the following points should be borne in mind. They are lyric poems, *i. e.*, they were sung to the lyre. The singers bent lovingly over their harps as they sang. To them they addressed the outpourings of their spirits. The lyric as a literary form is common to all people. It is their oldest form. It is a form, too, they never outgrow. The man who said he did not care who made a country's laws so long as he was permitted to make its songs was talking about lyrics. Since all this is so, we may well ask, what are the salient features of lyrics in general? They are these—intensity, brevity. They are never long, and they are always the expression of individual feelings and sentiments. Of all poetic forms they have, perhaps, the widest range. They may be festive and light, amatory or martial, didactic or sacred. Think of the skylark as painted by Milton in his "L'Allegro":

“To hear the lark begin his flight,  
 And, singing, startle the dull night  
 From his watch-tower in the skies,  
 Till the dappled dawn doth rise;  
 Then to come, in spite of sorrow,  
 And at my window bid good-morrow,  
 Through the sweet-briar or the vine,  
 Or the twisted eglantine.”

So we may think of the lyric singer. The range of the skylark's flight is open to him. He may soar and sing and singing soar, or he may be content to give out his voice from a humbler level.

So much for the lyric in general. Come now to these Hebrew lyrics, and see in what two respects they differ from other lyrics. One is that they are sacred. Think of the significance that goes with the fact that all the Hebrew lyrics that have come down to us are of this character. In the lyrics of other peoples we have the song of love or of victory, nuptial songs or funeral dirges. It is not so with the Hebrew lyrics. Here we meet with the religious life depicted in all its varying moods. If the singer is troubled, it involves his relation to God. Is he glad? The same is true. Is he pouring out confessions? The same is true. It may seem out of place to speak of this religious aspect in connection with literary form, but it is not really so. Being sacred, the Psalms are remarkably fitted for the lyric field. There is nothing that cannot find record in them. The other feature which differentiates these lyrics from others is their verse system. They are built up on parallelisms. Word does not answer word so much as thought answers thought. Have we not thought too little and made less of this unique feature of the Psalm lyrics? It is believed we have. Such terms as “synonymous,” “antithetical,” “synthetic” as applied to parallelisms frighten us, and we miss much of the rhythmic beauty of the Psalms. The only rhyme to which we are willing to yield ourselves is the verbal. But parallelism is the rhythmic movement of thought. Let a few examples show. Take this from Ps. ciii. 10:

“He hath not dealt with us after our sins,  
Nor rewarded us after our iniquities.”

Here is one from Ps. xxx. 5:

“For His anger is but for a moment;  
His favor is for a lifetime:  
Weeping may tarry for the night,  
But joy cometh in the morning.” (R. V.)

It only remains to be said that this parallelism is far from being a mechanical thing. It is a help to the thought. By combining parallelisms in different ways we get results that give the Psalms an elasticity that never checks the flow of thought. Every change of thought finds a mold in which it has fitting expression. The Hebrew lyrics thus become the confidant of the soul in all its varying moods, and they carry this advantage with them in translation.

But let us leave the discussion of the form for the spirit. Let us leave the vestibule, and go farther into the Psalm temple. As to the spirit of the best poetry, we cannot do better than let Milton be our guide. In his tractate on “Education” Milton gives these as the essential characteristics of good poetry. It must be simple, sensuous, and passionate. Let us now see how the Hebrew sacred lyrics measure up to this standard. Begin with simplicity. If the Psalms are anything in their language they are simple. Go anywhere into the Psalm country. Climb the mountains of joy, travel the uplands of faith and hope, go down into the valleys of doubt and trouble. Everywhere you meet with simplicity. Nothing is loaded down with ornateness. You never feel that the singers compose for æsthetic purposes. They are not giving us imagined experience. They are too serious and sincere. Professor Baldwin has said that the single lesson the Bible teaches concerning the use of words is sincerity. The composers of the Psalms illustrate this to a striking degree. They sang from the heart and they sang simply. What Bunyan did in the “Pilgrim’s Progress” they did long before him. They



treat great themes, but always make the language a true vehicle of the thought. To see how true this is, let us take a few examples. Take the Twenty-Third Psalm. It has elemental simplicity to start with; it deals with truths that do not belong to the few but the many. Here it is the thought of Jehovah's care—He leads, restores, comforts. But how simply the language lends itself to these great thoughts! Go with the singer in the Eighth Psalm out under the starry heavens. Why is it that as you read you find yourself looking into the starry depths and lost in the contemplation of the same thoughts? It is because the sublimity is not sacrificed to profuseness of expression. Take the prayer of Moses as given in the Ninetieth Psalm. Here you have sublime thoughts, yet what a perfect mantle the language is to the thought. The words help you to feel what Moses felt when he exclaimed:

“Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place  
In all generations.  
Before the mountains were brought forth,  
Or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world,  
Even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God.”

We meet with the same thing in the One Hundred and Thirty-Ninth Psalm. Here we have a sublime expression of faith in God as a Spirit transcending all space relations. God is felt and realized as a universal Presence. But it is one thing to feel this for one's self. It is a different thing to make others feel it. Yet this is what this Psalm will do for the dullest reader.

But what of the second quality that Milton said belonged to all good poetry? Can as much be said for the element of sensuousness as found in the Hebrew lyrics? We believe it can. Sensuousness as applied to language means that it is figurative, symbolic. It abounds in metaphors. Things are not argued. The writers do not write like men who stayed indoors. They do not write like philosophers. There is no smell of midnight oil about the Psalms. There is no “musty” quality. You may

open the Hebrew Psalter at random and find illustrations of this sensuousness. Take the First Psalm. There is the tree set by rivers of water, and there is also the chaff blown by the wind. The tree represents the righteous, the chaff the wicked. But the singer is not content with these figures. When he comes to work out the two contrastive pictures he again falls back on metaphor. There are grades of conformity to evil. There is such a thing as walking in the counsel of the ungodly, standing in the way of sinners, and sitting in the seat of the scornful. Walking, standing, sitting are simple metaphors, but they have a meaning for all minds. In one Psalm the singer cries, "Hold up my goings in Thy paths that my footsteps slip not." In another he speaks of God setting him in a large place. In another God brings him out of a horrible pit and out of the miry clay. There is no misunderstanding such language. It is more than adequate. It is impressive. Listen to David as he tells us in his battle hymn—the Eighteenth—what God was to him—rock, fortress, high tower, and buckler. Such a description of God is not metaphysical. It is one the common people hear gladly and understand. What could be more expressive than this: "Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of Thy wings"? Nothing. What could be more pathetic than this: "Save me, O God, for the waters have come into my soul"? Nothing. What could be more inviting than this: "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, He leadeth me beside the still waters"? Nothing. Such instances could be multiplied indefinitely, but enough have been given to show that the singers in these sacred lyrics, like Jesus, used the language of the field and the home and the market-place rather than of the school. Only a word need be added to account for this wealth of imagery in the Psalms. We need not be surprised over it when we think of the land in which the Psalms were produced. They are largely preëxilian, and, therefore, products of the promised land. Think of the variety of the scenery in Palestine; then think what a temptation it would be to these

singers to express mental activity in the language of physical phenomena.

It only remains to speak of the third element—passionateness. We have seen that the Psalms are artless and vivid. Can as much be said of their intensity? Let us see. It has already been noted that the Psalms give us not imagined experience, but actual. The Psalm lyrics are not artistic. They are not the interpretations of experience that the singers thought would be pleasing to God. The only way to study them is as the expression of actual experiences. When they doubted, they really doubted. When they were in despair, it was no sham. Their love and joy, and hate and sorrow, and faith and hope were actually felt. Even though we may not be able to tell what occasioned the varying mood of the singer, it is as Gilfillan puts it: "Each flower is rooted in truth. The poetry is fact on fire." Now, because the Psalms are the record of actual experience, they are passionate. When the singer cries in that morning piece—the Third Psalm—"Jehovah, how are my adversaries increased," he is in actual trouble, so he expresses himself warmly and intensely. When, in the Eighth Psalm, he exclaims, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him," he really feels the greatness of the condescension Jehovah has shown in giving him lordship over creation. When he cries, "Bless the Lord, O my soul," he is thinking of benefits received, iniquities forgiven, diseases healed. When he is led to cry, "Create in me a clean heart," he is actually burdened with the sense of sin. When he exclaims, "Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons and ye deeps," he actually feels like a healthy boy who must give expression to his feelings.

But the limits of this paper have been reached. These are some of the things that meet us in the literary study of the Psalms. It only remains to show what we may get out of these features that will commend the Psalm lyrics to all devout souls. In answering this question let us take up the points in the order in which they have been presented. The Psalms are lyrics. Be-

cause they are—and sacred at that—there is no mood of the soul of which they may not be the vehicle. So we have in the Psalms everything from pompous ritual down to penitential cry. We have household songs, national pæans, songs of triumphant victory, and songs of deepest spiritual struggle. Passing by this, we may ask what advantage we glean from their parallelisms. This at least—they carry their beauty in translation. What do we reap from their simplicity? They are accessible to all. Like our Lord, we may learn them in childhood, draw upon them in middle life, and in the hour and article of death breathe out our souls in language taken from them. What may we derive from their sensuousness? This: We have the highest truths, the deepest experiences, voiced in language that cannot be misunderstood, and which also may be readily made our own. We are not listening to truth clothed in the language of philosophy, but in the language of everyday life. Thus we see how truly poetry may become the handmaid of theology. Lastly, we may ask what benefit arises from their passionateness? This: There is no literature like the Psalms to rouse the devotional spirit. They come down to our level when we cry out of the depths, and they bid us come up higher when we call upon all that is within us to magnify and bless God, and they can quiet us even as a mother soothes her child. As Byron sang:

“The harp the Hebrew minstrel swept,  
 The King of men, the loved of Heaven,  
 Which Music hallowed while she wept  
 O'er tones her heart of hearts had given,  
 Redoubled be her tears, its chords are riven!  
 It softened men of iron mould,  
 It gave them virtues not their own;  
 No ear so dull, no soul so cold,  
 That felt not, fired not to the tone,  
 Till David's lyre grew mightier than his throne!”

## THE CATHOLICITY OF THE PSALTER

BY THE REV. CHARLES H. ROBINSON, D. D., WHEELING, W. VA.

**T**HE catholicity of the Psalter follows logically upon the demonstration of the proposition that, under God's design, the Psalms were inspired and providentially collected to be the manual of praise for the Church in all ages. If God did so design, then the universal adaptability and suitability of the Psalter to the purposes of praise are established. That this position is vindicated by an unprejudiced examination of the material and scope of the Psalms, or, in other words, that the Psalm-Book is itself a sufficient proof of its catholicity as a manual of praise, is the contention of this paper.

Notice, first, that the Psalter belongs exclusively to no one age of the Church. It has been urged against the Psalms as a canon of praise that they belong to the past—that they are Jewish in form, in spirit, and in scope, that they are of the Jew and so for the Jew, and, therefore, are superannuated as a medium of praise. Is this true? We admit, of course, the Hebrew auspices of the Psalter—that in form and style, in imagery and in much of its primary local reference, it betrays its Jewish authorship. So also does the Bible. Jesus Christ was a Jew. Who, however, will declare that the Bible is not the book of the twentieth century, or that Christ is not in His person the essential desideratum of all mankind? Let the Psalter speak for itself at this point. A true hymnal must be two things. In the first place, it must be a body of truth. If it does not teach the truth of God, it presents no material for the praise of God. What, then, is the Psalter doctrinally? Are its truths the truths of the Jews alone? Are its doctrines the doctrines of any one age of the Church? Are

its themes such as are held in leash by any one economy? With easy confidence we answer—no. In any just appreciation of the Psalter there is nothing clearer than that the Psalms, however Jewish in form or feature, are yet distinctly Christian in content. Rising superior to the arbitrary distinctions of “old” and “new” as applied to God’s one testament of truth, they exalt in praise that which is fundamental and essential in the teaching of both economies. Here are the doctrines that teach of God, of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, of man, of sin, of the Cross, and of plentiful redemption, of the ransomed Church, and of the triumph of righteousness upon the earth. Of these, and of every other cardinal doctrine of the Word of God, the Psalter treats, thus enshrining in its songs the substance of the faith of Christendom. Its truths are then peculiar to, and of right belong to, no one economy. They are free from all limitations of place, of racial conditions, of human institutions. They know no nationality or language; they have no sacred places; they are affixed to no locality. They touch the universal human heart and its instincts for worship, just as the light of the sun every morning touches our earth, illuminating it in every part, and then goes mounting on its imperial way, flooding other continents with light and making Nature everywhere to blossom and bring forth.

But a true hymnal must be not only a body of truth; it must also channel the devotion of the soul. It must interpret not only the truth of God, but as well the experience wrought by the truth under the impress of the Holy Spirit. What of the Psalter in this regard? Is its appeal to the Jew alone? Are the sentiments which it so divinely expresses the sentiments of but one age of the Church? Are adoration and faith and gratitude, penitence for sin, aspiration for holiness, longing for the divine, love of, and devotion to, the truth, the need of praise of but one class of souls only? We answer, When the Psalter found and satisfied the heart of the Jew in the expression of his praise to God, it found and satisfied the heart of the ages in this regard,

and by the token that the heart of man in all that constitutes its need of devotion is unchanged from age to age. Governments, civilizations, languages pass, but the soul in its essential needs and longings remains the same. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want," is not the language of a Jew, but of the man who has found peace and security in the shepherding care of God.

The cry of the Fifty-First Psalm is not David's cry, but the cry of penitence and confession in every age. The Ninetieth Psalm expresses the confidence of the soul's faith in God as certainly in the last as in the first cycle of the Church. Which is to the point of saying that the lyrics of the Psalter are the poems of the heart. They are not Jewish; they are human; and for the reason that they think the thoughts and respond to the aspirations that are common to the quickened soul in every age.

Notice, second, that the Psalter belongs exclusively to no one sect or denomination of the Church. It is as broad as the whole Church, and equally well adapted to each and every part of the Church in the matter of praise. It must be that to be catholic. If the Psalter admits of the charge of narrowness or sectarianism, if its point of view is at any distinct angle of vision, if its songs have in them a suggestion of denominational bias, then the Psalter fails evidently in its catholicity. But does it so fail? We assert that it does not. We believe not only that there is no truth that should find a place upon the lips of the adoring worshiper of whatsoever denominational creed that is not found in it, but that the truths it contains are the truths upon which evangelical Christendom is and ever has been agreed. It is the supreme advantage of the Psalm-singer that his songs are from God, and that therefore they embody the truth of God—the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. On the other hand, it must ever remain the embarrassment of those who use uninspired compositions in the praise of God that their hymns are at best but human conceptions of the truth. Such compositions bear upon

them necessarily the impress of the writer's peculiar views. They betray almost certainly in letter as in spirit a denominational bias. Uninspired hymns are, and of necessity must be, sectarian. If this be true, it follows that such hymns are subversive of the unity of faith; for by all the power of song to stir the heart and mold the thought and make theology they accentuate and perpetuate the differences that divide the Church. There is something truly anomalous in a Church preaching the unity of believers and praying the prayer of Christ that "all may be one," and at the same time singing the songs that by their sectarian bias and denominationalism foster the divisions thus deplored. Are such hymns necessary? We cannot believe that they are. Do we light our lamps or chandeliers when the sunlight of God's high noon is pouring in at our windows? Do we set our lawn sprinklers going in our dooryards when the clouds of Heaven are sending their abundant showers upon the earth? Do men carry coals to New Castle? The Psalter is not only adequate, but peculiarly adapted to the necessities of the whole Church in the matter of praise, and for the reason that it makes nothing of the things that divide the Church, but everything of those things that are held by the Church in common. Its truths are the great universal truths as seen not from any angle of vision, but in full and clear perspective from the throne of truth itself. Composed at a time when the Church was a unit as to the truth, and before the word was coined that expresses the differences that divide the Church, the Psalms "know nothing of rival theologies; they favor no partial creeds; they exalt no special lines of doctrine or experience such as fix denominationalism; but on the other hand they present simply the teachings of the Spirit of God in harmony with the experience which He produces." The position, then, of those who use the Psalter in praise of God is not narrow, but broad, so broad that into its fellowship of praise believers of whatsoever name or distinction may be safely invited without fear of infringing a hair's breadth upon their denominational testimony. Nay, more; to sing these songs of the Book and of



the ages is to sound that note the grateful music of which is already in the air, the note of Christian union.

But notice again that the Psalter is wonderfully adapted as a song-accompaniment to the world-wide activities of the Church. The Psalms have been that in the past. In the old-time Church they were the songs of the Temple and of the Synagogue, of the annual feasts and of the home firesides, of the nation alike in war and in peace, in times of prosperity and hours of adversity. The Jewish Church desired no other songs, for it needed no other. In New Testament times the Psalms were sung by Christ and His Apostles, a fitting accompaniment to the evangel of the Cross, which within fifty years was sounded in every great city of the times. In the early Christian centuries the Church sang the Psalms as she crossed the sea to Britain and the Rhine and the Danube to Northern Europe, thus introducing the era of world-wide extension. The Psalms have been the songs of the martyrs, whose blood is the seed of the Church, of the Reformers, whose words have changed the currents of history, of the great revivals that from time to time have renewed the life and inspired the soul of the Church. The average age of a Church hymnal, we are told, is fifteen years. For three thousand years the Psalter has held a continuous place in the life and worship of the Church. It has been accessory to the noblest achievements of the most splendid periods of the Church's history, and by that sign we claim its full ability to meet the needs of the present in this regard.

By what sign? First, that the Psalms are strong. A hymnology that is weak doctrinally or sentimentally is no hymnology for the Church in this age or any other. The forces with which the Church is in conflict are robust forces; the Apostle calls them "principalities," "powers," "world-rulers," "hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." For such a conflict the Church must have songs that have in them the strength of the truth and of God's right arm, and such strength by the testimony of the ages the hymnology of the Psalter has. It is this that has com-

mended the Psalms to the heroes of the Church, that has made them the songs of the critical and crucial periods of its history, that in times "when the iron has been in the souls of men, and they needed it in their blood, they have sung the Psalms."

By what sign? That the Psalms are sound. Their theology is the theology of the Book. He Who wrote the Bible wrote the Psalter, and the inerrancy of the one, therefore, stands or falls with the inerrancy of the other. Not so with man-made hymnals. The theology of many hymns, hymn-singers themselves being the judges, is questionable. The no uncommon spectacle of a Church bringing forth the rod of correction and scourging from its hymnal the errors and weak sentimentalisms that have crept into it does not inspire confidence in the working value of an uninspired hymnology. To such methods of discipline the Psalter is not amenable. It needs no oversight. Search it and you will find no errors of doctrine, no emotional extravaganza, no watery sentimentality, but everywhere the truth—the truth as God sees it, the truth as God has written it.

By what sign? That the Psalms are adequate. Is the Church the "pillar and ground of the truth"? Then does the Church in singing the Psalms sing the truth which it otherwise upholds. Is the Church a brotherhood as wide as the race? Then are the Psalms broad enough to voice the praise of every people and kindred and tongue in their fellowship at the altar. Is the Church an army with banners, in ceaseless conflict with the organized forces of evil in the world? Then are the Psalms a "battle cry" worthy of the fight and presaging the victory. Is the Church God's great evangelizing agency obedient to the command, "Go—Preach"? Then are the Psalms the songs of the gospel, exalting in spirit as in word the grace and power of the Cross. In a word, for every true posture and purpose and activity of the Church the Psalms are charged with the grace and power, the inspiration and resolve, the hope and courage, that come from God.

Are these things true? Then should the Psalter be in fact, as

it is completely qualified to be, the hymnal of the Holy Catholic Church. Is it too much to expect that the day shall come when these songs of Moses and of David and, as well, of David's illustrious Son, shall be the songs of the whole Church, voicing in world-wide melody the adoration and praise of all who love the Lord?

## THE CATHOLICITY OF THE PSALTER

BY THE REV. S. R. LYONS, D. D., RICHMOND, IND.

**T**HE defense of the catholicity of the Psalms seems almost like the defense of a self-evident proposition. The Psalms are a part of the Canon of Scripture. If the Bible is truly catholic, the Psalms must be also. But even self-evident propositions need clear statement and cogent reasoning if they are to be apprehended by all. The question may be stated thus:

Are the Bible Psalms for the purpose of praise to God in any sense narrow, sectarian, or inadequate?

The Psalms do not cover the whole field of poetry. Neither does the historic part of Scripture cover the whole field of history. The Psalms do not even cover the field of religious poetry. No more does the Bible cover the field of religious literature, but it is not on that account narrow or lacking in catholicity. Even so the Psalms, though occupying a comparatively limited field, are not themselves narrow, but as religious poetry intended for the service of praise to God they are catholic.

The catholicity of the Psalter as a part of the Bible stands or falls with the catholicity of the Bible itself. Religious sects exist, and each one has a multitude of followers and defenders, all claiming the Bible as their authority, and yet the Bible has never yet been charged with responsibility for sectarianism. That responsibility rests upon us, whoever we are, who hold partial or narrow views of truth. Our notions of Biblical truth may lack catholicity; the Bible itself, never.

The Psalms, therefore, as a part of the accepted Canon of inspired Scripture are catholic. Again, the Psalms were written before sects existed, when the minds of men saw truth in simple

terms and in its larger aspects, when the Church was a unit. The towering buildings of a modern city narrow greatly man's view of the sky. The man who gets a broad view of the sky must live in the open. The men who wrote the Psalms lived in "God's Out-of-doors." In these last days the edifices of sectarianism have narrowed the sky of truth. Not so when the Psalms were written. They contain no partial views of truth. They emphasize no special doctrines such as fix the boundaries of sects. They are, in short, the expression of the mind of the Spirit in terms of human experience which He Himself produces. They are therefore an adequate medium of praise for the Church Universal.

But the catholicity of the Psalms is evidenced less by such arguments than by the fact that in them humanity has, in all ages, found the supply of its spiritual need. The Bible, as a whole, must meet and satisfy two tests, the test of intellect and the test of life. Clear thought to-day distinguishes sharply between truth and theories built on truth, between the Bible and theories about the Bible, even as we distinguish between geology and geological theories. Theories of geology have come and gone because they have failed to meet the test of profounder and better-trained intellect. Theories about the Bible have come and gone—a ghostly procession fading before the dawn—because they could not satisfy the test of clear and cogent intellect. But the Bible itself remains, God's storehouse of spiritual truth meeting any test which clear and honest intellect may put upon it.

The Bible also meets and satisfies the test of life. The severest test of a loaf of bread is not a chemist's analysis, but a man's hunger. Will it satisfy the man's hunger and sustain his life? Even so, the severest test of the Bible is the test of life. Will it satisfy spiritual hunger and sustain spiritual life? What a cloud of witnesses hovers about us in affirmation. But from this point of view, what is true of the Bible as a whole is true in greater degree of the Psalms. In them God has spread a table in the wilderness from which hungry souls have been filled with

all the fulness of God. Consider the range of human need which the Psalms voice—the length and breadth and height of the truths which they convey, the greatness of their apprehension of God. Canon Driver, in his “Introduction to the Old Testament,” says: “In the Psalter the devotional element of the religious character finds its completest expression; and the soul is displayed in converse with God, disclosing to Him its manifold emotions, desires, aspirations, or fears. It is the surprising variety of mood and subject and occasion in the Psalms which gives them their catholicity, and, combined with their deep spirituality, fits them to be the hymn-book, not only of the second Temple, but of the Christian Church.” The late W. Robertson Smith, in his “The Old Testament in the Jewish Church,” says: “Although the Psalms represent a great range of individual religious experience, it is to be noticed that they avoid such situations and expressions as are of too unique a character to be used in the devotion of other believers. The feelings expressed in the Psalms are mainly such as can be shared by every devout soul, if not in every circumstance, yet at least in circumstances which frequently recur in human life. Some of the Psalms are manifestly written from the first with a general devotional purpose, as prayers or praises which can be used in any mouth. In others again the poet seems to speak, not in his private person, but in the name of the people of God as a whole; and even the Psalms more directly individual in occasion have so much catholicity of sentiment that they have served with the other hymns of the Psalter as a manual of devotion for the Church of all ages in both dispensations.”

But granting that such testimony to the catholicity of the Psalter is true, the further question arises: Is the truth of the Psalter in its breadth of view, its depth of insight, and its fulness of expression such that it will remain an adequate hymnal for the Church Catholic. The answer to this may well be fearless. The Christian consciousness of Apostolic days as expressed in the New Testament is one with the great heart of truth as ex-

pressed in the Psalms. Is it God's care for me that occupies my mind? The Twenty-Third Psalm and the Sermon on the Mount are one. Does my heart hunger for the righteousness that burns like a fire in the message of Jesus? I find in the Psalter the perfect expression for my heart's passionate cry: "Lead me in Thy righteousness; evermore my steps maintain." Does the heart-searching question of Jesus to Simon—"Lovest thou Me"—pierce my heart also, and quicken my slumbering affection? What a perfect expression for a passionate soul comes from the Psalter: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God!" If the Christian consciousness of the Apostolic age finds adequate expression in the Psalter, it is not probable that a later age will find just cause to complain of its catholicity. Place side by side a gem from modern Christian poetry and one from the Psalter:

"For though from out our bourne of time and place  
The flood may bear me far,  
I hope to see my Pilot face to face  
When I have crossed the bar."

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me."

Compare these with the truth as it is in Jesus and note whether the Psalter suffers by the comparison. The truth of Christ is, "Lo, I am with you alway," and the expression of the hope of meeting Him when the "bar is crossed" is pitifully inadequate when compared with the utterance of the Psalmist: "Through the valley of the shadow—Thou art with me." It is this adequate expression of truth, this largeness of view, this perfect spiritual vision, which gives to the Psalter its perpetual catholicity.

A vital point in this discussion remains to be touched. Is this truth of the Psalter so expressed that it is an adequate vehicle of praise? What is praise to God? Feeling, emotion, desire, aspiration, affection, inspired and directed by religion and ad-

dressed to God, may be praise—often it is not. These feelings, emotions, desires, aspirations, and affections may be so expressed that man himself is thrust into the foreground of consciousness, while God is left, so to speak, in the shadow. Does the spiritual song express merely the religious emotions of the singer, or does it properly express the praise of God? Does the song lift up the singer? Or does it exalt God? Vital questions, truly. Here is a crucial test of the catholicity of praise. Tried by it, the great mass of modern hymnology shrivels like stubble in fire, and its choicest hymns are pitifully inadequate when compared with the Psalter. The Psalms exalt God. When the Psalmist speaks of the troubles that afflict the just, it is that he may praise his Deliverer. When doubt strikes at his heart, and he cries, "Hath God forgotten to be kind?" instantly the answer exalts God:

"My weakness this, yet faith doth stand,  
Recalling years of God's right hand."

And the picture sketched by the song is a picture of weak man in the arms of a mighty and abiding God. In their exaltation of God the Psalms are incomparable, and in this they are truly catholic. A self-conscious age may sing its own emotions instead of the praises of God; but the Bride of Christ cannot be held for long with her eyes upon the sheen of her own garments, and when she turns from these to gaze upon her Bridegroom's face, then will her praise burst forth again in the Songs of the Ages, and the Psalter of the Church Catholic will have come to its own.



## THE IMPORTANCE OF AN EXCLUSIVE USE OF THE PSALMS IN PRESENT-DAY APOLOGETICS

BY PROFESSOR JESSE JOHNSON, D. D., XENIA, OHIO

**A**POLOGETICS concerns itself "with the grounds and defense of Christian belief and hope." At any particular time its duty is, besides exhibiting the abiding basis and the time-tested defenses of our faith, to meet and repel the special attack that is on.

The present-day assault is upon the inspiration of the Scriptures. Various in source and aspect as the attacks are, their united impact is felt where our wall of defense bears the inscription, "Holy men of God spake borne along by the Holy Ghost." It is therefore the special duty of present-day apologetics to maintain and promote belief in a Bible fully reliable and authoritative because wholly and uniquely "God-breathed." It is believed that this is central and vital; that such a persuasion, if it prevailed, would check the hurtful forces that are operating to-day in the realm of religious thought. The Christian consciousness, as it is called, could no longer be lawgiver and judge, and spin its own web of subjective "Christianity." It would be recognized that Christianity is what true religion must be—a religion of authority, and that the authority of the Highest. Men would listen to God, as is meet.

The urgent need for such a prevailing conviction concerning the Scriptures should weigh upon the heart of the whole Church. For it is not merely the few whose special work is apologetics who constitute "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. iii. 15). It is to the Church that this most honorable title is applied.

Upon the Church as a whole is laid this momentous duty of supporting the truth of God among men, and holding it firm and high in their regard. Every member is under grave obligation to magnify this the Church's high office with reference to the truth. Every member shares the responsibility, and participates in the honor, attaching to the office. No question can appear insignificant that bears upon the establishment of God's truth among men. All proper efforts made to this noble end, whether they receive present public favor or not, are dignified and glorified by this charge intrusted to the Church by her King.

If, then, it is the Church's high duty to promote belief in an inspired and authoritative Bible, the question may well be asked whether the choice and use of a manual of praise do not have much to do with shaping the public attitude toward the Scriptures. It may well be so. Rightly the Church gives a prominent place to the singing of praise. In most Churches this is the only part of the service in which all are expected to join with their voices. It is an exercise, moreover, which God has made delightful to nearly everybody, particularly during that period of life when opinions and attitudes are being permanently shaped. The power to mold the public thought exerted by the people's familiar songs is proverbial. It results, therefore, that, if there be involved in the choice and use of a manual of praise any neglect of God's Word, any implication of the parity of uninspired writings with the oracles of God, or, on the other hand, any exaltation of the sacred Scriptures as divine and superior to all else, public opinion will be influenced accordingly.

Now the exclusive use of the Psalter is important in present-day defense because it bears impressive public testimony to the Bible as God's own Word, and therefore as superior to every other writing and absolutely authoritative for faith and life. That such testimony is involved in the Psalm-singer's position and practice, let it be our present care to show. Apart from the principle that "positive divine prescription is requisite to warrant any form of worship," and the doctrine that God has ap-

pointed the Psalter for use in the New Testament Church, and has not appointed anything else (which are the Psalm-singer's fundamental reasons for his position)—apart from these, what is the situation when a Church approaches the question of selecting a manual of praise? The very existence of a separate book of praise-songs in the Bible makes it, to say the very least, a candidate. No Church can address itself to the selection of a praise-manual with an open field for its own nominations. At the very start it finds a candidate standing before it, so distinguished in origin, position, character, and long acceptance as to challenge attention and more than suggest the question whether further nominations are needed or in place. What shall we do with the confessedly noble Manual put before us by its very existence and its place in the inspired Word? If there were no such distinct Book of "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" in the Bible, and no appointment of anything else, the Church could make her own collection and use it without uneasiness as to any attitude she would thereby be taking toward God's Word. But there the Book stands, a completed collection of praise-songs, inspired and written for the precise purpose for which the Church is seeking a manual, used for that purpose for millenniums, an integral part of the inspired Word. Under these circumstances choice and use of any manual necessarily involve taking an attitude toward the Bible, which attitude is a part of the Church's public testimony concerning the Scriptures.

Of such a deliberation we believe there is but one outcome that gives clear and unmistakable testimony to the Bible as God's own Word, and that is to choose the Psalter only. Of the reasons for dealing with the Psalter in any other way we have not seen any statement that does not wrong the Scriptures. If the Psalter fails of selection it stands before the world as a nominated and defeated candidate. It must be thought unfit in some way for present-day use, or not so suitable as something else. If it is unfit, then God has either left the New Testament Church an unfit manual or none at all, and in the latter case the confessed

ill-success of the Churches in providing manuals is proof that it was a serious omission. If the decision is to adopt it and adapt it, or to adopt it and supplement it, it must be because of defectiveness or deficiency found in it. What believer in the Bible as the very Word of the Most High will care to attempt the recasting of any part of it? If twenty-five Psalms are culled from the Psalter and distributed through a volume with a thousand uninspired compositions, it must be because every one of the thousand is deemed more worthy a place in our praise than any one of the one hundred and twenty-five Songs of the Spirit that are left out; for surely the most worthy are wanted. Can such mingling of the two kinds of songs leave the Psalms, in the public mind, on their proper plane of high superiority as the Songs of the Spirit? Can the choice of a multitude of hymns in preference to most of the Psalms be so explained as not to disparage inspiration by exalting pious thought to the dignity of inspiration?

And in point of fact not a few have so felt the logic of their position as to frankly erase the line of distinction between the inspiration of the Bible writers and the spiritual illumination enjoyed by all true disciples. These men tell us plainly that writers of hymns are inspired as well as the Psalmists. As representative of this type of teaching we may mention the late Rev. Dr. R. McCheyne Edgar, of the Irish Presbyterian Church. In his book entitled, "Progressive Presbyterianism" (pp. 144, 145), he says in so many words that God's "inspirations were not exhausted when the Canon was complete," and asks, "Is it not reasonable to suppose that He has inspired the poets who have devoted themselves to sacred song?" He mentions eighteen of these poets, from Ambrose down to Frances Havergal, and says, "We cannot in fairness fancy that such hymn-writers did their work without the inspiration of the divine Spirit." This idea, moreover, is among the people, and no wonder. Some such equalizing of the inspiration of David and the muse of Watts, who proposed to "make David talk like a Christian," seems necessarily

involved in any combination of hymns with Psalms in the Church's praise-manual.

But between inspiration and spiritual illumination there is a distinction with a difference. Inspiration was a special gift bestowed upon chosen teachers that men might have an entirely reliable statement of whatever God saw fit to communicate. It therefore secured to those teachers adequate apprehension of what was to be communicated and correct expression of it. It is thus not a favor bestowed on the teachers for their own spiritual benefit, but is rather intellectual equipment and guidance for the benefit of others. For this gift, moreover, there was no more use when the divine communication of which it was the means was completed.

That communication once made, how shall it be rendered available to men for quickening, cleansing, and upbuilding? For the moral condition of men is such that the mere presentation of truth to the mind and the intellectual apprehension of it are not enough. The Spirit must "enlighten" the taught, as before He inspired the teachers. Spiritual illumination, then, is a grace. Primarily it is a personal spiritual blessing, and is enjoyed by every true child of God. It is designed to secure the proper effect upon the heart of truth already given by God. By it we behold the beauty and feel the power of that truth. For this, its own purpose, it is to be desired and used. But that purpose is not the communication of new truth. Spiritual illumination does not guarantee that error will not be taught along with truth, or that truth known will not be faultily expressed.

The importance of this distinction for defense of God's Word will be evident on a moment's reflection. If the hymn-writers are inspired with the inspiration of the Bible writers, or the Bible writers with only that of the hymn-writers, then we must either accept the hymns as divine, and therefore wholly true and above censure—which no one does, or consent to place the Scriptures on a plane where we may subject them to our judgment—approve some parts and reject others, just as all claim the right to

do with the hymns. And evidently, as this sentiment, identifying the so-called inspiration of Christian poets with the inspiration of the sacred penmen, makes headway, the Scriptures must decline in the estimation of men.

Now, limiting ourselves to the Songs of the Spirit not only puts us on the safe ground of obedience to what we think is the divine appointment, though that is the Psalm-singer's first consideration, but it puts us on firm ground and in strategic position for defense of the whole Bible as uniquely inspired, absolutely authoritative, and valuable beyond comparison. We bear solemn testimony to the faith in God's Word which is in us, and meet the responsibility involved in our "pillar and ground" commission. And let none deem such testimony a little thing—a thing of none effect. It is witness borne by deed, and that is the kind that arrests attention, and impresses, and provokes thought. It lends solid backing to every utterance intended to exalt the Word of God in the regard of men. We ask men to prefer the Bible, to revere it, and obey it, and our appeal comes with the momentum of our solemn witness to our deep preference of it to all else for the worship of God. In so far as such testimony is borne faithfully, yet in the spirit of meekness, it will command respect. No doubt there is much ignorance of the reasons for the exclusive use of the Psalms, for which Psalm-singers will admit that they themselves are in part responsible. It may be admitted, too, that there is inconsistency in the practice of some professing Psalm-singers. These facts do indeed limit the apologetic value of our position. But when all proper allowances are made, it still remains true that our position is being more widely understood and respected and pondered, and its value as testimony to the unique character and position of the Bible correspondingly enhanced.

In concluding, brief mention will be made of but two further considerations showing the apologetic value of the exclusive use of the Psalter. Religious interests are surely conserved when the people are built up in divine truth and protected from error;

and the Church that uses only the Psalms is making the best provision for the defense of the people in both these ways. Doctrinally the Psalter is complete, divinely proportioned. Moreover, its truth is constructive, formative. It shapes the fabric of the thought and life of its users. Errors do not fit into the definitely built and articulated structure. For just one instance, no low view of the Atonement can be held consistently with the Psalter's view of God and of sin. We do not forget that the chief purpose of the Psalms is praise to God. He who sings them will not be allowed to forget that. Indeed, in no one item is the present apologetic value of Psalm-singing more strikingly apparent than just in this, that it calls men's thoughts out of themselves and sets them upon the living God. Yet it is true that God has attached to the pleasant duty of praising Him the great blessing of a thorough training in the very truth of God. The value for defense against error of singing such truth till mind and heart are shaped by it can hardly be overestimated.

Finally, the exclusive use of the Psalms insures that the Church shall not be the unwitting or unwilling agent, in her service of praise to God, of the incursion of error into the Church and its dissemination among the people. Error is more dangerous even than we know. If truth unalloyed can be found, it ought to be used in a service that reaches the people so powerfully.

The Church cannot be indifferent to even the danger of error. As a defensive measure, it must be guarded against with great care. This is admitted by the Church when she provides against the perversion of the pulpit and the professor's chair to the purposes of error. Nor would any Church willingly admit a song that carries error. But that the Church of God has suffered with error carried along in her hymnology is but too well known. People can sing error into themselves, and the history of the Church is not without instances. We make no charge that the hymns are a tissue of falsehood. We need go no further than the censures of hymn-users themselves to show that the

danger is no product of the Psalm-singer's fancy. Now, there is a Manual of Praise that is free from error because it is "God-breathed." The Church that adopts it and it alone, because it bears the stamp of God, may rest in the assurance that she is not even in danger of putting her own seal on error and setting it before the people to sing to God and into themselves.



## THE IMPORTANCE OF AN EXCLUSIVE USE OF THE PSALMS IN PRESENT-DAY APOLOGETICS

BY THE REV. M. G. KYLE, D. D., PHILADELPHIA, PA.

**T**HE form in which this subject is stated plainly demands the following treatment: I. Apologetics; a definition. II. Present-day Apologetics; an explanation. III. Psalmody in Present-day Apologetics; a discussion.

I. The function of apologetics is, in general, to safeguard the truth of God from impinging error and to "justify the ways of God to men." More specifically, it is to keep to the fore the "present truth" and stand in the breach against the latest assault. Apologetics is the standing army of the Church militant, which faces every way in time of peace, always presents a solid front in the line of immediate progress, and concentrates at the danger-point in time of war. Thus apologetics becomes an important part of the practical means of the Kingdom of God for the accomplishment of its blessed mission.

II. Present-day apologetics, while not neglecting for a moment its general duty to safeguard the truth and "justify the ways of God to men," is pressingly called to its more specific task of keeping to the fore the "present truth" and standing in the breach against the latest assault. Present-day apologetics is all that apologetics ever was, and something that it never was. Every form of unbelief that ever assailed the Church of God is still at large and venomous; all the heresies and "isms," all the philosophies and "ologies" that have existed under time-worn names in centuries gone by, keep springing into new life under new names in our own day. And in addition to all this, there has come in the present day, mainly from the technically literary side of learning, and under the very adroit and taking name,

“The Modern View of the Bible,” a scientific massing of all the forces of the guerrilla warfare of unbelief in all ages; and accompanying this *coup de guerre* is the diplomatic demand for the canonization of unbelief itself and its enrolment among the saints and worthies on the specious plea of “loyalty to truth and the scientific method.”

The daily press of the world, in its hypocritical altruism, journalistic literature of the day, with its apparent assumption of omniscience, and modern fiction, from its arrogated seat as moral lawgiver of mankind, voice the demand for this “modern view of the Bible.” There is a “modern view” of the Bible which needs no apologetics against it. The Church learns. The philologist, the geographer, the archæologist, the critic, under the guidance of the promised Spirit are ever coming into the truth, not getting away from it, are finding out the truth and corroborating it, not finding out that it is all a myth, a legend, or something else belonging to fairyland. But that which calls itself the “modern view” is something very different.

A scientific and clear-cut statement of the things most generally agreed upon by the exponents of the “modern view” is difficult to obtain; but the goal toward which the “modern view” looks, and to which some of its advocates have already come, is easily discerned. Professor George Adam Smith says, rather vaguely, “We may say that modern criticism has won its war against the traditional theories. It only remains to fix the amount of the indemnity.”<sup>1</sup> Professor T. K. Cheyne ventures to speak out a little on the dangerous subject of indemnity when he belittles and thrusts into the realm of the problematical the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, His descent into Hades, His resurrection and ascension, and says, “The question of questions is, what was there in the personality of Jesus which led the earliest disciples to identify Him with the Christ the Son of God?”<sup>2</sup> That is, of the “virgin birth, the virtuous life, the

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> *Bible Problems*, 1904.

vicarious death, and the victorious resurrection," he looks askance at all but the virtuous life. An old author from the days before unbelief became so diplomatic stated the case explicitly when he said, "In the former part of the *Age of Reason* I have spoken of the three frauds—mystery, miracle, and prophecy; I have spoken also in the same work upon what is called revelation, and have shown the absurd misapplication of the term to the books of the Old Testament and the New."<sup>3</sup> These are the words of one Thomas Paine, who speaks candidly, if bluntly, of the three frauds, viz., "mystery, miracle, and prophecy," instead of insinuating doubts concerning the mystery of the incarnation, the miracle of the resurrection, and the prophecy of His atonement. I have quoted this execrated author that we may not be deceived by the fine-turned phrases of the polished advocates of the "modern view." Indeed, we must note that the practical method for the introduction of the "modern view," as announced by its advocates, is not less important from an apologetic standpoint than the "view" itself. Professor Cheyne has this in a recent number of the *Nineteenth Century*: "The most important point for those of us who study the Old Testament is . . . how by a combination of old methods with new, and by the attainment of a new point of view, to reconstruct our study; and how by the gentlest possible transition to introduce our pupils and the public to this new treatment of the Old Testament." And the *Homiletic Review* furnishes this from the pen of Dr. Willard Scott: "The wise minister, under these circumstances, will not need to be told to treat his subjects suggestively rather than dogmatically." "A considerate care also should be used, which may be both apt and noble at the same time in one of a right spirit, to avoid words and phrases which have come to have an unwelcome meaning to people of conservative tendencies, such as 'Higher Criticism,' 'Evolution,' the 'Man of Galilee,' and the like. Ministers should consider not only what they mean by the words, but what others may infer from them—oftentimes a very different

<sup>3</sup> Paine's *Age of Reason*, p. 127.

thing—and to make their approach to new truth as far as possible along the familiar paths of the fathers, contenting themselves with such variations or inferences, not very extensive at any one time, as will set people thinking.”<sup>4</sup>

To meet the enemy in the olden time, when he buckled on his armor, advanced as an enemy, and cried “Stand guard there,” was one thing, something that developed the apologetics of a century ago; to meet the same enemy in academic robes or in priestly vestments, with prophetic mien and even ecclesiastical authority, and withal assuming all the importance of a scholarly “Four Hundred,” is quite another thing. This is present-day apologetics.

III. The exclusive use of the Psalms may be variously defined, but for the purpose of this paper it means that the Psalms be accorded the same preëminence and authority that has been accorded hitherto in Protestantism to other Books of the Bible, to the end that nothing else shall displace or supplement them *for the purpose for which they were given*. There are important questions of literature, of interpretation, and of criticism, as the authorship of the various Psalms, the completeness of doctrine in the Psalms, and Thirtle’s recent discovery of the meaning of the titles of the Psalms, which connect the Psalter in a vital way with present-day apologetics, but are entirely outside the scope of this paper, which is confined to the apologetic value of an exclusive use of the Psalms in the praise service.

The importance of such an exclusive use of the Psalms in present-day apologetics is, first, in general, to safeguard against error one of the most potent and impressive portions of religious worship. The Church would do well to heed that pregnant aphorism of Andrew Fletcher: “If a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation.” One little social custom of a people, whether in Church or in State, is more potent for good or for evil than a very great theory, whether it be embodied in law or in the-

<sup>4</sup> *Homiletic Review*, September, 1904.

ology. So long as the Psalms are accorded an equal pre-eminence and authority with the other Books of the Bible, so that nothing else shall displace or supplement them in the use for which they were intended, the singing custom, one of the most potent for good or evil of all human customs, is safeguarded against error, while the use of hymnology of human composition opens the door to the insidious introduction of every species of belief or unbelief, of "ism" or sectarianism. Historically the making of hymn-books had its inception in the desire of Bardesanes and his gifted son Harmonius, of the second century, to popularize false doctrine, and they have ever been one of its most copious and dangerous channels. Here, then, is a very real use of Psalmody in practical apologetics, and one not the less timely because of its age and universal applicability.

But second, and more specifically, the importance of an exclusive use of the Psalms in present-day apologetics is in maintaining the uniqueness of Scripture through inspiration. True, the "modern view" admits the uniqueness of Scripture, but it is the uniqueness of literary and moral character, which makes it only *primus inter pares*. The "modern view" also speaks—and very lovingly—of inspiration, but, again, it is only an inspiration that distinguishes *among many*, not an inspiration that differentiates *one*. Present-day apologetics has need to stand for the uniqueness of Scripture, not only for an aloofness, but for an aloneness of Scripture, through inspiration *unshared*. This uniqueness is being assailed both as to its authority and as to its preëminence, and at the very point of departure from an exclusive use of the Psalms. Canon H. Hensly Henson of Westminster puts the case thus: "Moreover, it is hard to see why the traditional practice of limiting the lessons read in Church to the Bible should forever continue. It was the custom in the primitive Church and throughout the Middle Ages to read the lives of the saints. We want to supplement the canonical Scriptures by the Christian compositions which have secured the ap-

proval of general acceptance, and taken the rank of spiritual classics among religious people, just as in the worship of the Church the Psalter has been supplemented by hymns and anthems.”<sup>5</sup> And why not? It is useless to lift up holy hands in horror at the Canon’s conclusions unless in practice we reject his premises; his logic here is impeccable. If we may find substitutes or supplements for one God-given Book for the purpose for which God gave it, who is to say nay to us if we indulge our fancy and our vanity in doing the same for every other? And if the choir and the congregation have such large “Christian liberty,” it is a petty meanness that denies to the more highly trained pulpit the same privilege. And if the Church of Christ takes to herself to find something else “just as good” as the Psalter that God has given her for a specific purpose, need we wonder that refined indifference, not to say infidelity, goes further along the same road and announces the finding of something “just as good” and as much to the purpose as all the rest of the Bible.

Third. The importance of the Psalter in present-day apologetics is in opposing the enthronement of subjectivism in the religious life. The whole Bible belongs to the realm of the objective in religion. The law of God is a command from without; the gospel is a message from without; prophecy is warning and exhortation from without, not mere apprehensiveness; the Proverbs are precepts of everlasting, universal, absolute truth from without, not mere vagaries of the hermits of thought; the Epistles belong to the field of dialectic, of premise, comparison, and conclusion, not to the field of speculation, going off on tangential airships into the vasty realms of the unknown and the unknowable; and even the Apocalypse announces itself to be the images of things “which must shortly come to pass.” So the Psalms are the objective praise of God. They celebrate what God is in His being and His attributes, and what He does in creation, in providence, and in redemption, together with the Spirit-guided experience of a human soul, and set man in the

<sup>5</sup> *Contemporary Review*, April, 1904.

presence of the Almighty to humble himself before the throne of God. On the other hand, the "modern view" of the Bible, when condensed into a single scientific term, is subjectivism, more definitively, Emersonian subjectivism. It is the setting up of a subjective standard of truth, the enthronement of self as the final judge of what is truth. The poet said, "Things are not what they seem," but this new philosophy stands upon the notion that things are what they seem, and if not, so much the worse for the things. A recent great sermon on a great occasion by a great preacher, who is himself one of the foremost advocates of the "modern view," had for its theme "The seemly is the true." But with fallible and exceedingly various human taste as the standard of the seemly, "The seemly is the true" means simply that what any man likes is truth for him. *This is subjectivism.* Now this subjectivism is the formative principle, the very soul and spirit, of the historical criticism of the Bible, which is the working method of the "modern view." I listened in the summer of 1904 to a most astonishing illustration of this subjectivism run mad in a lecture at Berlin by Professor Adolf Harnack, a leading exponent of historical criticism and of the "modern view" at the present day. In his course of lectures on the trustworthiness of the Gospel records he had come to the incidents of the last week of the Saviour's life. He concluded that everything was authentic except the Lord's last words on the cross, "Into Thy hands I commend My spirit." This expression he thought was a summing up by Luke of the trustful sentiments of the Twenty-Second Psalm, and by him put into the mouth of the dying Jesus. But if Luke discerned this to be a summing up of the Psalm, and an appropriate expression of the mind of Christ, and if Harnack could so clearly analyze Luke's mental processes and penetrate to the secret source of his words, why may not Jesus Himself have thought these thoughts and used these words? But great is German criticism, and great is the subjective standard of truth in the "modern view" of the Bible!

Now, apologetics of to-day has to deal with this new claim and

practice—of a subjective standard of truth, that “the seemly is the true.” And one of the most dangerous outlets of subjectivism is permission by Christian sentiment to every soul that can give off a spiritual vapor of some sort to do so, while the rest of the Kingdom wafts it heavenward as the very breath of praise to God. To be healthy physically we have need to keep clear as much as possible of the exhalations of bodies, and breathe God’s pure air; and to be healthy spiritually we must get rid of the exhalations of souls, and breathe God’s pure air. Thus one of the most powerful preventives and correctives of this detestable subjectivism of the present day, and so one of the most practical methods of present-day apologetics, is to sing or chant God’s praise only in the objective realities of God and His works, and the Spirit’s work in the soul, as celebrated in these same Psalms of the Bible—which God has given us so to use.

The determination of the proper use of Biblical Psalmody in the Church belongs not to the scope of this paper, and, indeed, that must be determined by every branch of the Church for itself; but that determination, whatever it may be, right or wrong, is vital in present-day apologetics. Perfection is not to be expected, but any branch of the Church that does not make a safe determination of this question in its practice will not long stand before the assaults of the present-day conflict. This question is far broader than United Presbyterianism. I appeal to every branch of Christ’s Church and, with no intention or desire to thrust upon others our determination of it, call upon them to determine it for themselves, face to face with the fact that it stands at the very heart’s center of the Biblical question of to-day.



## PSALM VERSIFICATION

BY THE REV. W. E. McCULLOCH, PITTSBURGH, PA.

**C**ONCERNING the poetic merit of the Hebrew Psalms there is no controversy. By common consent they are ranked among the world's best literature. For loftiness of theme and majesty of utterance they are unsurpassed. No other songs have lifted the soul of man so near the eternal throne. "The Book of Psalms," says Lamartine, "is a vase of perfume broken on the steps of the temple and shedding abroad its odors to the heart of all humanity."

To transfer in metrical form the thought and spirit of the Psalter into the languages of other peoples has been the task of Christian scholarship for hundreds of years. The Psalms, wholly or in part, have been versified in the languages of all nations where the gospel of Christ has found a place. The object of the present paper is to call attention to those versions which have wielded the largest and most permanent influence, from the time of the Reformation to our own day. It is safe to say that no other agency was more powerful in spreading the new doctrines than Psalm-singing.

The honor of producing the first popular versification of the Psalms belongs to Clément Marot, one of the most talented poets of France. His edition, containing fifty-eight selections, was published at Rome in 1542, and at Geneva the following year. It was subsequently completed by Théodore Beza. The Reformation in France may be likened to the recent singing revival in Wales. The Psalms of Marot instantly took hold upon the people, and were sung with delight in the court of the king, upon the streets of cities, and by the peasantry in the fields. They superseded the indecent ballads of the day, and at first, under

sanction of the Pope, they were sung by Catholics, as well as by Protestants. Vast crowds of people assembled in a certain street in Paris and lifted their voices heavenward in these sacred songs. But the thunders of Rome were soon heard when it became evident that Psalm-singing went hand in hand with Lutheranism. The inspired Psalter then became the peculiar property of the Huguenots. It put iron in their blood. It nerved them for the awful strife to which they were called. In secret services for praise, under the shadow of mountain crags, in lonely places of the desert, by the shore where the surges rolled their accompaniment, in the fierce charge of battle, and in somber procession to the scaffold, these heroic souls of whom the world was not worthy chanted their God-inspired songs.

The Psalms of Marot and Beza were early introduced into Switzerland and the Netherlands, and became a mighty power in furthering the cause of the Reformation in those countries. As to the merits of this particular version there seems to be little room for doubt. Voltaire, indeed, bestowed his sneer upon it. But if the verdict of the people has any weight, then the French Psalter must be accorded a high place. Marot was a poet of unquestioned ability, and Beza wrote in close imitation of the style of Marot. The following lines from the One Hundred and Forty-First Psalm, said to have been the favorite of Catherine de' Medici, may be taken as an example :

“To Thee, O Lord, my cries ascend,  
O haste to my relief,  
And with accustomed pity hear  
The accents of my grief;  
Instead of offering, let my prayer  
Like morning incense rise;  
My uplifted hands supply the place  
Of evening sacrifice.”

Among the English versions the first that occupies our attention is that of Sternhold and Hopkins. We are told that in Great Britain “there were over one hundred and fifty persons who

versified either a part or all of the Psalms by the close of the seventeenth century." The most famous name on the roll is that of John Milton, but the author of "Paradise Lost" seems to have halted and stumbled somewhat in his translation of David. Thomas Sternhold is said to have versified fifty-one of the Psalms, John Hopkins fifty-eight, while the edition was completed by English exiles at Geneva. It gradually came into use throughout England and Scotland. This edition was subjected to a great deal of criticism and even ridicule. To quote Montgomery: "The most faithful adherence to the original has been claimed for this version, and need not be denied; but it is the resemblance which the dead bear to the living." The Earl of Rochester wrote:

"Sternhold and Hopkins had great qualms,  
When they translated David's Psalms."

Fuller said that "two hammerers on a smith's anvil would have made better music." As an example of the crudity and coarseness apparent here and there, note the following from the Seventy-Fourth Psalm:

"Why dost Thou draw Thy hand aback,  
And hide it in Thy lap?  
O pluck it out and be not slack  
To give Thy foes a rap."

But, on the other hand, there are passages at which no critic would dare to sneer. For example, the tenth verse of the Eighteenth Psalm:

"On seraph and on cherubim  
Full royally He rode;  
And on the wings of mighty winds  
Came flying all abroad."

The One Hundredth Psalm, as we sing it to-day set to the music of "Old Hundred," is from the Sternhold and Hopkins

version. Whatever may be said of the defects of this version, let us not forget that for a period of one hundred and thirty years it filled a large place in the religious life of English-speaking people.

In 1698 the version of Tate and Brady was adopted by the Church of England, under the authority of William III. In smoothness and literary finish it surpassed its predecessor, but, in the opinion of many, it was inferior as regards rugged strength and conformity to the original. We can discern something of a modern spirit in the acrid criticism of Bishop Horsley: "I can sing almost every Psalm in the version of Sternhold and Hopkins as the Psalms of David; I can sing those of the New Version as the Psalms of Dr. Brady and Nahum Tate."

Concerning the so-called version of Isaac Watts little need be said. It was an imitation, and was never intended to be anything else. We do not question the good doctor's motive, but we believe that he departed from the straight and narrow way of wisdom. Bayard Taylor would not have dared to treat "Faust" after the same fashion that Watts treated the Psalms. To improve on David is a large contract.

As United Presbyterians, we are especially interested in the history of Psalm versification in Scotland. Dr. Clokey has truly observed that "in a history of the Psalms no people, next to the Jews, can hold a more prominent place than the Scotch."<sup>1</sup> It is evident that from early times they were familiar with certain of the Songs of David rendered into popular verse. The first authenticated version, however, was that by the Wedderburn brothers, known as the "Dundee Psalm-Book." It contained twenty Psalms, one of which, the Fifty-First, was sung by George Wishart on the night preceding his martyrdom. The first complete version used by the Scotch was that of Sternhold and Hopkins. It was adopted, after many changes and some additions, in 1564. For nearly a hundred years it held its place in the Scottish churches and around the home-altars, and its rugged rhymes, set to simple melodies, were the inspiration of thousands of souls.

<sup>1</sup> In *David's Harp in Song and Story*.

But the defects of the Old Version were very apparent. After about forty years there began a definite movement in behalf of a new translation. What is known as the "Royal Psalter" deserves mention. James I., convinced that he possessed not only the wisdom of Solomon, but the poetic spirit of David as well, versified the first thirty Psalms, when his ambitious project was cut short by death. His work was completed by Sir William Alexander. Charles I. attempted to force this piece of royal workmanship upon the Scottish people, but they would have none of it. That which finally won their approval and supplanted the Old Version was the work of an English gentleman, Mr. Francis Rous. This version was presented before the Westminster Assembly in 1643. After being subjected to the scrutiny of various committees it was adopted by that body in 1645. But the Scottish Kirk was not in a humor to accept it off-hand. For five years it was under the eyes of revision committees, was submitted to presbyteries, and discussed before General Assemblies. It was revised and amended until Rous himself would hardly have recognized it. The date of its adoption was 1650.

This version has held serenely on its way through the stress and storm of two hundred and fifty years. It passed the age of Moses, and its "natural force was unabated." It has been termed "doggerel" by the uninitiated, and as regards certain portions the charge may not seem unfounded. There are stanzas which rouse the risibility of the most reverent. For example, the following:

"A man was famous and was had  
 In estima-ti-on  
 According as he lifted up  
 His axe thick trees upon."

To offset such specimens as this, there are passages of great beauty and power which none will undertake to improve. Rufus Choate is quoted as saying that he "preferred Rous to Watts."

It is impossible to estimate the influence which the Scottish Version has wielded upon the spiritual destinies of mankind.

Through generation after generation it was woven into the very life of the Scottish people. It furnished them their home-songs and their battle-songs, and was their mainstay through their long and terrible struggle for civil and religious liberty. It was not confined to Scotland, but was adopted by the Presbyterians of England and America, and became their song-book for a century. Thus far-reaching in its grasp upon the minds and hearts of men, it stimulated the intellect, put stamina into the moral fiber, and created a virile type of Christian character which the passing of many generations has not worn out. He who believes in the eternity of influence will not look with light regard upon the Scottish Psalter.

The version with which all United Presbyterians are familiar had its inception in a memorial addressed to the first General Assembly of our Church, held in 1859. It was authorized by the Assembly of 1871. The history of the latest version, recently completed by the Inter-Denominational Committee, is related in another paper.

Such, in brief, are the main facts in the story of Psalm versification since the Reformation. It is a story of evolution, and it is easy to discern the law of the survival of the fittest. The necessarily imperfect character of the work has now and then given rise to the question, Can we claim inspiration for a Psalter that has been translated from one language into another and cast in metrical form? This question really belongs to the scholastic period, when worthy divines spent a considerable portion of their time in splitting hairs. It is well answered in the words of one of our own church fathers: "A faithful translation is but a transfer of matter in its verity, connection, and order of composition from one language into another." If the United Presbyterian Psalter is not inspired, neither is the English Bible.

The question as to what are the essentials of an acceptable version demands our attention. Simplicity is the first requirement. It is not edifying to attempt to praise God with ambiguities. Fidelity to the original must be insisted upon, so far as

preserving the real spiritual sense of the text is involved. But the attempt to be rigidly literal has often resulted in the sacrifice of literary form and the introduction of words and phrases which jar upon the modern sensibility. Furthermore, a version that will commend itself must conform as far as possible to present-day literary standards. The models of a century ago cannot be foisted upon this critical age. The marvelous success of Marot's Psalms must be attributed very largely to the fact that they were up-to-date in every particular. That there is plenty of room for improvement in our present version, no reasonable man will deny. To the average Gentile there are many parts of it which appear crude, and seem to smack of ancient days. There are disjointed combinations of words, harsh constructions, and startling expressions here and there. There would seem to be need of a larger freedom in translation. "Tyre," "Philistia," "Cush," might give place to some such expression as "Gentile nations" without any perceptible loss to him who would sing with the spirit and the understanding. The well-known lines in our version of the Sixtieth Psalm,

"In Moab I will wash; My shoe  
I will to Edom throw,"

could surely be toned down and softened into such form of expression as would preserve both sense and dignity.

During the past few years we have been slowly awaking to the fact that the Psalms, dressed in proper form, will surely win their way. Our best versifications, set to appropriate music, have been scattered broadcast, and have been appreciated at their true value. No uninspired compositions can compete with the Psalms when the Psalms are free from handicap. In the new "Bible Songs" we have unquestionably the best praise-book in the world. Its best friends, however, will not claim that it is perfect. The large and inspiring task before our Church is to evolve a book of praise that will challenge the critic, while it grips the mind and heart of the discerning public. Let us set

ourselves to the task with pride in our heritage and confidence in the final issue. For ours are the songs of Solomon's Temple, of Christ and His Apostles; the songs sung by martyrs amid the Roman Catacombs, by Waldenses among the fastnesses of the Alps, by the Huguenots who baptized the soil of France with their blood, by the Swiss and the Hollanders and the Germans of Reformation times, by the Covenanters on the hillsides and in the mountain caves of Scotland, by the Pilgrim Fathers who dared the terrors of the sea and the savage wilderness; the songs sung by saintly souls through the ages; the songs of the inspired Psalter, whose whole sentiment may be summed up in its final exhortation, "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord."



## PSALM VERSIFICATION—THE UNIFORM METRICAL PSALTER

BY THE REV. J. C. K. MILLIGAN, D. D., NEW YORK, N. Y.

**T**HE more than five years given to the work of translating the Psalms in meter have been a labor of love, a time of delightful fellowship with Christian brethren, and they have deepened the conviction that the Psalms, and the Psalms alone, are worthy to be the praise songs in the worship of the Lord our God.

Authority to translate the Psalms, or any Scripture, into a local vernacular comes from the fact that Jesus and the Apostles quoted the Old Testament mainly from the Greek translation, and not from the original Hebrew. The corrections they made in that translation warrant the revision of existing translations whenever a more accurate rendering can be given.

What, then, is the authority of a translation? The right to use an approved, though imperfect, translation as an ordinarily sufficient copy of the Word of God is undoubted; but it has no ultimate authority except as it expresses the precise thought of the original. The only authoritative translation of the Old Testament is found in the quotations made of it by Jesus and the Apostles in the New Testament; and there is no authoritative translation of the New Testament. A translation of the Psalms must follow the light so largely shed on them by the New Testament; and it will have the authority that the scholarship and fidelity of the translator give it, and nothing more. Hence there is always a final appeal to the original; and the best translation should be improved as defects are found, as linguistic attainments increase, as historical illustrations are discovered, as Christian experience is enlightened by careful study of the text, and as

providential calls come with the promised aid of the Holy Spirit: "It shall be given you in that hour what ye shall say, and how ye shall speak."

Translations of the Psalms have been specially provided for popular use from the earliest Reformation periods. Beza, the colleague and successor of Calvin, made a translation of the Psalms that became the psalmody of the French-speaking Churches, the music having been chiefly furnished by Marot. This praise service was accompanied by marked manifestations of the converting and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit and of the presence of the Lord Jesus, as He promised in the Great Commission given to His Church. Especially in the French, German, and English Versions, the Psalms have been as constant and helpful factors in the propagation of Christianity as any part of the New Testament; and, in exemplifying the life and power of godliness which Jesus and the Apostles inculcated, they have held an honored place and exerted a remarkable influence. "The Psalms in Human Life," by Rowland E. Prothero, has passed through many editions. In it the author, after extensive research, gives this testimony to the incomparable worth of the Psalms. "More than any other book, the Psalms have influenced human life and action, have inspired writers for their best work, have been the most familiar to the great men of all time, have most comforted humanity in times of trial, and have been most intimately associated with the momentous events of history. With the singing of Psalms the Pilgrim Fathers set sail in the *Mayflower*; the Bay Psalm Book was the third book printed in America; till the end of the eighteenth century the Psalms were exclusively sung in the Churches; in 1787 Benjamin Franklin, quoting Psalm cxxvii., moved that the Convention that was framing a Constitution for the United States should offer prayer for divine aid in their difficult work. If you could have only one book, many would say: The one book would be the Psalms, in which is included, as Heine says, 'The whole drama of humanity.'"

The old Scottish Version, with its antiquated style and quaint expressions, was a marvelous product of Christian scholarship and poetic skill. It laid the foundation for all the recent attempts to make and revise our translations.

Sternhold and Hopkins was used for a long period as the best rendering then given to the Psalms. One of its verses in the Eighteenth Psalm is often quoted as an inspiration in declaring the majesty of the Lord and His unfailing oversight and care of all parts of the universe :

“On cherub and on cherubim  
Full royally He rode ;  
And on the wings of mighty winds  
Went flying all abroad.”

The Anglicans superseded this version by Tate and Brady, which still holds a large place in their services. Mr. Francis Rous made a complete new translation of the Psalms, and on account of its merits it was proposed in Scotland as a substitute for Sternhold and Hopkins. Before accepting it the Scottish Assembly referred it to a committee, whose changes and original renderings converted it into a really new version, though it is often incorrectly called Rous' Version. The Irish Presbyterian Churches and all the American Psalm-singing Churches until a few years ago used this version exclusively. But its many antiquated words and phrases, its imperfect rhymes and measures, the almost exclusive use of common meter, and occasional mistranslations, led to frequent efforts by private individuals and Church committees to revise it and provide new versions in a variety of meters. In Scotland it is still used in its unchanged form, the smaller Churches using it exclusively, and the larger using both Psalms and hymns. Their attitude is shown by the following action taken in 1905 by the various Assemblies: The English Presbyterian Synod resolved not to adopt the Hymnary prepared by the Irish Assembly and the United Free Church of Scotland, but to improve "Church Praise," its own

selection of Psalms and hymns. The Church of Scotland by a large majority rejected a motion to coöperate with other Churches in revising the metrical Psalms in ordinary use, on the ground that the present Version, with all its defects, was interwoven with the very religious life of the Scottish people. The United Free Assembly, on the recommendation of the Committee on Praise, "did not think itself called on to approve of the New Metrical Version of the Psalms, which had been prepared by brethren in the United States." The Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland passed an act rescissory repealing the different Acts of Assembly permitting the use of hymns and instrumental music, so that the use of these in the Free Church is now prohibited.

After the organization of the United Presbyterian Church of North America in 1858, almost the first work was arrangements for the revision of the Scottish Psalter; and in 1871 the completed Book was adopted with substantial unanimity. In a conservative spirit the Common Meter Version was preserved, but it was thoroughly amended, and over one hundred and forty new versions were prepared in a variety of meters, making it a worthy vehicle of praise for the sanctuary, the prayer-meeting, and the Christian family. In 1879 the Irish Assembly adopted a Revision, making fewer emendations, retaining many of the defects, and adding a few original translations of excellent character. The American Reformed Presbyterian Synod in 1889 also issued a Revised Version that aimed to remove defects and eliminate the many paraphrases of the old Psalter.

Thus four Versions of the Psalms brought confusion into the praise service, and led to the desirability of a Uniform Metrical Translation that would be accepted by all Christians as the divine Psalter, the one Church Hymnal.

This movement for a Uniform Psalter was started in 1893, and after much correspondence nine Churches in Canada and the United States agreed to undertake the work. A Joint Committee of twenty-three members, ministers representing the dif-

ferent Church Assemblies, were selected to carry forward the work to an early and harmonious conclusion. The first meeting of this Joint Committee for actual work was held in New York City in 1901, though months had been previously given to preparation for the laborious task. For five years the Committee diligently prosecuted their responsible effort to versify the inspired Psalter, make it acceptable to the entire Christian Church, and thus unify and perfect the praises of the Lord according to His own appointment. The members privately studied to secure the true translation, the most suitable meter, the best poetic expression for the exact thought of the text, the correct accent of every word, and a natural rhyme. The whole Committee met twice a year to compare the results of private study, consider and decide upon proposed renderings, and, if possible, reach unanimous conclusions. Nine public sessions of the Committee were held, continuing for about ten hours a day for ten or fifteen days at each session. Their Revision was completed in New York, April, 1905, and is now before the Churches for examination.

The difficulties in the way of Psalm versification are neither few nor small. The Committee were charged to keep close to the original text, to conform to the language of the Authorized and Revised translations, to avoid extended paraphrases, to provide a variety of meters, and to express the inspired thought with chasteness and elegance of style in accordance with modern standards and tastes. It has been well said that a translation "must not be so literal as to convert rich prose into poor verse, not so faithful as to be punctilious in interpretations, nor yet bound to the Hebrew idioms, while preserving the precise form and color of the inspired sentiment."

Hebrew poetry has neither rhyme nor meter, and to introduce them without marring the text compels poetic license for defects in both. Hebrew parallelisms differ greatly in the fulness or brevity of the truth expressed; but every line must fit the poetic measure, and something must be omitted or added to the original. But how much of the text may be omitted, or how much padding

may be inserted without departing from a faithful translation? An exact metrical reproduction of the original is impossible; and a word-for-word rendering would be neither meter nor a true translation. The Standard American Version says in the Preface: "The conception of the writer is not really reproduced by a literal translation. The Hebrews attributed mental actions or emotions to various physical organs, whereas in English such a trope is limited almost entirely to the heart and brains. . . . The attempt to translate literally from the original has not infrequently led to Hebraisms which had better be avoided, which in some cases must be called bad and outlandish." This is specially true in the translation of poetry in which the Oriental figures of speech abound. The Joint Committee here met their greatest hindrance to harmonious action. Some shuddered at every word of the original that was omitted, and trembled for the Ark when a word or phrase was added to the text; and yet one or the other must be done, or the work would stop. In nearly every case, after careful comparison of views, the form closest to the exact thought of the original was followed, and the truth of the text was retained without sectarian bias. The names of nations hinder the use of Psalms lxxxiii. and lxxxvii. Is it essential to retain these names, and sing such a verse as this:

"Gebal, and Ammon, Amalek,  
Philistia, those of Tyre,  
And Assur joined with them; to help  
Lot's children they conspire"?

The Committee retained some names to show the history referred to, and instead of the others made it, "The nations far and near," including the hostile peoples of to-day with those of the past. In the Eighty-Seventh Psalm the names are given literally, but all in one central verse, which may be omitted and the thought retained.

The divine names are most important, as they designate the true God, His Being and unsearchable character. Each name

is a distinct description, an added revelation of His Person and perfections, a new view of the depth and height of the Infinite God, our Saviour; and the name used by the inspired writer is exactly the character that the Holy Spirit there desires to be the matter of our praise. If we omit or change the name given by the Psalmist, or add a name, we change the divine thought for a poetic fancy, and substitute our idea in its place. To insert a name of God to make a rhyme or fill out a measure is not due reverence. In a few exigencies of rhyme or meter the Uniform Psalter fails to give the precise name, but no other Version is so exact except the American Revision, which restores the Memorial Name, Jehovah, in every place from which Jewish superstition removed it. Jehovah is so often Jesus, "Whose name every tongue should confess," that this name might well be represented by "Jesus" instead of "Lord" or "God"; and the use of that precious name would make the Psalms more acceptable to a multitude of Christians, and would obey the divine injunction, "whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."

The Committee favored a single version for each Psalm because a unity of rendering seemed essential as a standard translation and for uniformity in worship; but a few second versions were added when a free rendering had been adopted, or when a precious old version was retained with its defects, as Psalms xxiii., c., ciii., etc. Doubtless hymn-singing Churches will add hymns to the Psalter, and Psalm-singing Churches will add some of their own preferred versions. There is a reason for more than one version: a metrical rendering cannot always be as exact as the prose, and an idea of the original that is not clearly expressed in one meter may be brought out in another; besides, the meter adopted in one version may be more acceptable and give the Book additional favor and wider use. While the Uniform Version will be used in united services, each denomination may add to it in their own sanctuaries, or even retain the old.

It is not expected that the Uniform Version will at once come

into general use. Recent revisions have removed objections to the old version, and our prejudices and attachments will favor its retention. Hymn-singers have revised their hymnals, have little knowledge of the Joint Committee's work, and no strong preferences for inspired Psalmody. The completed Book is now before the Assemblies of the Churches. An examination must determine its character and its fitness to be the Book of Praise for the Christian Sanctuary. The verdict will depend on its merits and the unprejudiced treatment it receives. Possibly it is too free for us, and too literal for liberal hymn-singers. Examine it closely, and mark all its failings; but consider it mainly as an introduction of the Psalms to those who have long used the hymns exclusively. The Committee earnestly aimed to make it acceptable to all parties, and the merits of the work are specially due to the zeal and ability of our hymn-singing brethren.

The almost unanimous approval of the work by the members of the Joint Committee is no slight testimony to its value, because with few exceptions no adopted rendering of a Psalm is the work of any one of them. Many minds have left their impress on nearly every verse, and the impartial judgment of all has been secured at each step. It is then fair to say that in the judgment of an able body of men, thoroughly acquainted with the work, and reasonably impartial, this Version far exceeds their own highest expectation at the outset and earlier progress of the work. The guidance and blessing of the Holy Spirit were manifest at every meeting in difficulties overcome, views harmonized, and results secured. To God be all the glory. The Version is confidently believed to be a more faithful translation, more poetic and smooth in diction, better adapted for the use of the choicest variety of church music, and thus more worthy of approval, than any extant version. It is hopefully commended to the favorable judgment of the Christian Churches, and the blessing of the Lord is devoutly sought in its behalf.



## THE MUSICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE PSALMS

BY THE REV. CHARLES F. WISHART, ALLEGHENY, PA.

**T**HE miracle of Psalmody, the standing witness of its inspiration and authority, is the perfect way in which it has been adapted to the various musical interpretations of all the peoples among whom it has been used. We know but little of the Hebrew music by which these Psalms were first interpreted. Musical notation seemed unknown, and it is altogether improbable that the accent marks of the Psalms were guides to melody. Of harmony, in the modern sense, there was nothing, save, perhaps, the combining of a droning and insistent bass from the instruments with simple one-part melodies from the voices in measured chant or antiphonal response. Yet though his melodies have been swallowed up in the silence of the ages, and have left us no slightest echo, it is certain that the Hebrew had a definite, and at least partially developed, musical form. Three thousand years before Christ the Egyptians were using our minor scale. Israel, coming out of Egypt, celebrated her victories in bursts of song. The schools of the prophets taught music. The temple was a musical center. With its vast orchestra, its choir of four thousand voices, its two hundred and eighty-eight trained leaders, its three chorus-conductors, the temple music, wild and perhaps almost barbaric to modern ears, must have been overwhelmingly majestic. As David's Psalms rolled out in tremendous unison, or in stately antiphony, deep answering unto deep, God's glory filled His courts. Through such music God spoke to myriads of lives.

“It softened men of iron mold,  
It gave them virtues not their own.  
No ear so dull, no soul so cold,  
That felt not, fired not to the tone;  
Till David's lyre grew mightier than his throne.”

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It is a far cry from the days of Solomon to the early Christian Church, from the wild, splendid pomp of massed choirs and swelling orchestras to the little groups of simple unlettered folk who met in upper rooms and sang their songs of praise "to Christ as God." A few humble unwritten melodies, handed down from father to son, easy of range, in Oriental minor keys; these the Master sang at the Last Supper, the disciples chanted in the early churches. Pliny hints to Trajan that this singing was antiphonal. Hilary testifies that the whole congregation sang. Beyond this, we have few hints concerning this simple, quiet, primitive musical form. Yet the same Psalms which, a thousand years before, had fitted so perfectly the crash and blare of the ponderous temple service, now blended so splendidly with the informal and unaccompanied singing of a few humble people in a quiet prayer service that they became an inspiring and fusing force of prime magnitude in the first three centuries of the Christian era. Jerome eloquently writes, "Go where you will, the plowman at his plow sings his joyful hallelujahs, the busy mower regales himself with his Psalms, and the vine-dresser is singing the songs of David." And those songs were on the martyr's lips when, from dungeon and arena, the freed soul winged its way to God!

Let us now briefly scan modern musical development, noting whether the Psalms have kept pace with its progress and stood its tests. The Church has been the nursing-mother of modern music. Says Sir John Hullak, "The first public use of music by every people has been in religious rites and ceremonies." At once sheltered and stimulated by the Church, modern musical form has developed from crude beginnings, "short fragments of melody which belong to a remote antiquity." Time would fail us to tell the story of that development; how, four centuries after Christ, Ambrose of Milan gathered these fugitive melodies and made the first arrangement of church music, using simplified scales borrowed from the Greeks; how Gregory, two centuries later, began a crude notation by means of Roman letters; how

Hucbald of Flanders, by his uncouth diaphony, developed the first rudiments of harmony; how Guido devised the syllables of modern notation; how Trance of Cologne began to mark time, using triple time in reverence for the Trinity; how the Renaissance brought a new conception of the relation between beauty and holiness; how under its inspiration came elaborate harmony and counterpoint; and how, coincident with the Reformation, Palestrina gave to church music the final touches which determined its modern form. Suffice it to say that Protestantism and modern music flowered together. When thought burst the shackles of priests, harmony burst the shackles of pedants. When the Word was freed, Music stood, a willing and perfected messenger, ready to sound it through the world.

Nor did this progress leave the Psalms behind. They have not simply kept pace with modern music. They have set the pace all along the way. As naturally, as inevitably as they fitted into the worship of Solomon, or the primitive forms of the Early Church, they have at once molded the new order and conformed to it. With splendid aptness they rang in the sonorous strains of the German Chorale; in the stirring vivacity of Marot's Genevan Psalter, whose lively melodies were on the lips of many a brave French gentleman as he faced death on Saint Bartholomew's Day; in the severely simple one-part music of Sternhold and Hopkins' Version, which made old London ring as thousands sang it at Saint Paul's Cross of preaching days; in the battle songs of the "Ironsides" and the hunting songs of the Cavalier; in the plain, grave music of the Scottish peasant whom Burns so beautifully describes, leading his reverent family in their evening devotions. Says Professor Dickinson, "The Psalms contain a sublimity of thought, a magnificence of imagery, a majesty and strength of movement, that evoke the loftiest energies of a musical genius that ventures to ally itself with them. . . Although many of the greatest masters of harmonic art have lavished upon them the richest treasures of their invention, they have but skimmed the surface of their unfathomable

suggestion." How true this is will be seen when we glance outside our Psalters and note the great list of musicians who have drunk deep of the inspiration of Psalmody. Palestrina, Bach, Handel, Tinel, Franz, Costa, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Dvorak, Mozart, Schubert, Liszt, Saint-Saëns, Gounod—these and scores of others have woven their loveliest art creations around the Spirit's sacred words. Beethoven wrote little vocal music, yet one of this master's great songs is based on the Nineteenth Psalm. Luther echoed the Forty-Sixth Psalm in "Ein Feste Burg." Mendelssohn caught its inspiration in the "Reformation Symphony." Wagner heard it from afar and thundered it through his tremendous "Kaisermarch." Wherever you go, directly or indirectly you may trace to these words the musician's most splendid aspirations and ideals.

We take it for granted that the praise value of the Psalms is linked in a very real sense with their musical setting. Given such a rich and noble heritage of words, it is a very vital question as to the musical form best calculated to conserve and interpret them. A few principles may guide.

1. Such musical settings must be singable. There have been two general treatments of Psalmody; the one is liturgical, the other congregational. We of the Reformed Churches have shrunk from all that smacked of liturgy. Yet if we admit that these words have their preceptive and devotional, as well as their praise, purposes, we need not shrink from the limited use by our choirs of settings too difficult for the masses. Even so, the glory of Protestantism has been her congregational singing. The more elaborate liturgical forms, replete with art value and devotional inspiration, have had their dangers. The Latin hymns and complicated singing of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries were large elements in the spiritual decay of that period. I count congregational singing an absolute essential to the continuance of Protestant faith in the world. Such singing demands music lying within the range of ordinary congregational capacity. A great composer was once shown the score of a church song which

placed the tenor phrase, "Praise the Lord," below "middle C." "No tenor can praise the Lord below middle C," said the musician. Yet our congregations are sometimes made to wrestle with similar feats of musical agility such as might well make a trained choir stare and gasp. The results sometimes remind one of the mistake of Joshua, when he said to Moses, "There is a noise of war in the camp," and received the reply, "It is not the voice of them that shout for the mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome, but the noise of them that sing do I hear."

2. Such musical setting must be suitable. Our forefathers had but few Psalm tunes. The Scottish Psalter of 1635 had one hundred and forty-three tunes. But fifteen years later Rous' Version appeared without music. The unsettled times, the poverty of the people, the unvaried meter, the crude versification, and the custom of lining out, all militated against musical development, until the people knew only some dozen tunes, which had to do service for all kinds of Psalms. The "twelve orthodox tunes" of the Scottish Presbyterian became sacrosanct. The common attitude toward them is illustrated by the remark of Dr. Guthrie's servant, that she had "sung the Psalms of David to the tunes of David all her life, and would never sing anything else." These old tunes, Dundee, Martyrs, Elgin, Windsor, and the like, were admirable of their kind—dignified, devotional, impressive, and singable. But the fatal defect was lack of variety. You cannot take love songs, and war songs, and faith songs, and prayer songs, and songs of sorrow, and songs of joy, songs in many varieties of literary form, and compress them into one unvaried musical setting. Says Herbert Spencer, "They sin against science by using musical phrases which have no relation to the ideas expressed." The children of science are often wiser in their generation than the children of religion. We are only learning that we must search until we find the particular musical setting to illustrate and enforce the particular sentiment and literary form of song. I do not mean by that the foolish and

futile search for mere novelty in church music. This is a crime against art as well as against Christianity. But I do mean that somewhere there is a best musical setting for every Psalm, or part of one. Our business is to find it, at any cost of time, pains, or money, and, having found it, to wed the words and the song, and let no man put them asunder. We have scores of Psalms which might be sung into the popular familiarity of the One Hundredth or the Twenty-Third had we but suitable music which has become as integral a part of the whole effect as "Old Hundred" in the one case, or "Evan" in the other. May I be permitted to express my conviction that suitable music for the Spirit's words can only come from consecrated musicians. Beethoven said of his own Mass in D, "From the heart it has come, and to the heart it will go." Only music straight from the warm heart of a child of God can fittingly interpret God's Songs to His Church.

3. Such musical setting must be strong. We have said that it should have such simplicity as will adapt it to congregational use. But that is not the simplicity of weakness. It is the simplicity of strength. Never must we so strive to make music easy as to make it cheap. Said Rowland Hill, "Why should the devil have all the good music?" Why, indeed? High standards compel high attainments. The best possible musical education is in holding before the Church the best possible music. I have said that the glory of Protestantism is its congregational singing. The liturgical Churches confront us with trained choirs. Gentlemen of the ministry, we must answer them with trained congregations. W. T. Stead has said that the spread of the Welsh revival depended on whether the English could sing like the Welsh. Nor is it beside the mark to say that the spread of the Reformed Churches is linked with the training of our congregations in the sacred art of praise. In a German hymn-book there is this motto, "For our children only the best is good enough." What a splendid motto for our congregational song-books, for old and young alike. If we cling to these glorious words of inspiration, not only

is it our solemn duty before the world to fit them to the best possible music, in stateliness, majesty, grandeur, dignity, beauty, purity, fulness of harmony, musicianly movement and modulation; it is our duty before God to see to it that our congregations learn to love and sing such music. It is toward that better type of praise that all the Churches are turning to-day. The day of the cheap, the tawdry, the ephemeral, is soon to be over, please God. Give these perfect songs of ours a musical setting even approaching their possibilities, and they will argue for themselves far better than we can argue for them. With such achievement we may challenge the world of art—we may challenge the Churches—we may challenge the ages. With such music shall our voices fittingly blend with that mightier chorus where

“The cherubic host in thousand choirs  
Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,  
With those just spirits that wear victorious palms,  
Singing everlastingly devout and holy Psalms.”

## THE MUSICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE PSALMS

BY THE REV. WILLIAM H. FULTON, CHICAGO, ILL.

“Sing, oh earth, sing to Jehovah,  
Shout aloud, rejoice and sing;  
With the harp sing to Jehovah;  
With melodious voice and string.”

**I**T is evident from the beautiful old song that the theme now before us is not a new one, but as old as the Psalms themselves.

In response to a request for suggestions for this paper, one deeply interested in the subject replied, characteristically, “The best book I know of on the musical interpretation of the Psalms is the Book of Psalms.” That is the exact truth, and the essence of it will be found to be that the Psalms by their very nature demand *musical* interpretation. The Psalms were conceived in music. A sympathetic study of them makes it clear that the effort of the Psalmist was to achieve poetic and musical form to express the music in the heart. The Hebrews were a musical people. They were sensitive to the rhythm of life all about them. They caught the cadences in Nature. They knew the symphony of the morning stars. There was an anthem for them in the roll of the seas. The mountains and the hills broke forth before them into singing. As a race they were instinct with song. Music, both vocal and instrumental, was practiced by all classes, and while judged by modern criteria it might seem rude, it was nevertheless music according to the standards of the time.

Preëminently did music characterize the religious life of the Hebrews. Their consecration of it to the service of God makes Israel unique among ancient peoples. No other nation approached them in this. It is probably true that from earliest times music has been connected with the religious cult of all



nations, but that is about as much as can be said; it was "connected"—connected as the accompaniment of barbaric religious dances or as in the beating of tom-toms in Central Africa or gongs in the Chinese joss-house, to drive away evil spirits, but offering no resemblance to the praise music of the Jews. Alone among the nations the children of Zion raised sacred music to the dignity of an art, making most elaborate provision for it in their temple service.

It was out of this atmosphere that the Divine Spirit called forth the Psalms. They are musical meditations, musical supplications, musical adoration. A musical atmosphere is, therefore, native to them. It is their very breath of life. In all ages they have readily taken to music at its best. One has only to glance at the scores of the great masters to see how easily the Psalms become one with noblest strains. Bach, Handel, Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Liszt—all found in them exalted utterances ready at hand for moments of highest inspiration, and not only so, but oftentimes they found in them the inspiration itself. It is a question, then, whether there is any real interpretation of the Psalms that is not in some sense musical. They were written to be sung. Merely to dissect and state the substance of a Psalm is largely to lose it. The Psalms belong not to the classroom but to the choir.

It would seem, therefore, that of all religious bodies the Psalm-singing Churches, having their music-born material for praise, should have given the greatest thought and effort to the development and enrichment of worship music—should have striven to give the Psalms their proper atmosphere and truest interpretation. It is a most amazing and humiliating anomaly that just the reverse of this has been true, at least in the nearer generations of our own ecclesiastical descent. With the most exalted material for praise in their hands, our fathers were satisfied with a praise service that was singularly crude and barren. Too often among them the poetic and rhythmic structure of the Psalms was almost wholly ignored, and noble music was eschewed or frowned

upon as a thing of evil. No doubt this was in reaction against operatic tendencies in the Church. Naturally the Scotch, like the Germans, are an eminently musical people, and at the beginning the Reformation in Scotland, as in Germany, was a burst of song. The reaction illustrates the sad results when men consent to be governed by their aversions rather than by their admirations.

But if our fathers erred in this respect, we have proved ourselves all too filial by our faithful imitation. Too little have we appreciated the importance of the musical interpretation of the Psalms, contenting ourselves with bearing witness when we might have been bearing trophies. But the only purpose in referring to past failures is to point out and emphasize thereby present duty. There is such a duty. As a Church, or a group of kindred Churches, we make no claim, theoretically, to being the special champions of the Psalms, but it has practically come to that, at least so far as the singing of metrical versions is concerned. Therefore, believing as we do in the superiority of the Psalms to all other praise matter, we are brought under an obligation to them—the obligation to give them, so far as we may be able, interpretation worthy of their character. It is not too much to say that this should be our chief concern for them.

We hope for the Psalms that they will win popular acceptance; that the whole Christian world will come back to a practical appreciation of them as vehicles of praise. There is but one way to realize this hope—give the Psalms a chance to show their incomparable worth; give them the best possible form and setting; then send them forth to lay siege to the hearts of men. In the end that is where their case must be won. However necessary the theological argument to buttress our own convictions, it will not be half so persuasive with the people as will the appeal the Psalms make for themselves when fittingly sung. That will ever be accepted as the best material for praise by the great mass of believers everywhere which best enables them to make melody in their hearts unto the Lord.

The Psalms must stand the severe test of the survival of the

fittest, especially now that the passing back and forth among the Churches is accomplished so easily. They must stand on their merits as weighed in the hearts of men rather than on a syllogism. Practically, if not theologically, their authority will be internal rather than external. In the end the argument will be not a dissertation, but a song. The author of this paper believes that the Psalms will stand that test—stand it gloriously, recording, as they do, every emotion of the human heart, from the burst of ecstatic joy to the cry of the solitary soul in the dark, and that, therefore, as a Church, or group of Churches, we are called to the task—which ought to be a joyous one—of showing to the Christian world the musical possibilities of the Psalter.

Our Churches have of late been making commendable effort in this direction. Witness the "Bible Songs" now in use. Yet it is evident that we are far short of the possibilities within our reach, and that, therefore, the problem of interpretation is still largely before us. As to technical details involved in that problem, they belong to experts, and are, therefore, beyond the scope of this paper. There are, however, some general remarks which may not be out of place here.

First of all, our Psalm-singing Churches, treasuring as they do a praise material that literally breathes melody, must have a high appreciation of music as an aid to worship. Noble music is truly spiritual in its function. It belongs to divine worship. At its highest it *is* worship. It appeals to, and opens up the great fountains of, human emotion as does nothing else. Of all the arts it is the most subtle, pervasive, and irresistible in its influence upon the spirit of man. Music has ever been the servant of religion, stirring, uplifting, and moving men toward God. Luther swung open the doors of the Reformation by means of song; the evangelists from Wesley on made use of music to prepare the souls they would reach with the gospel; in the Welsh revival, that modern Pentecost, the Spirit came with a rushing, mighty breath of melody.

To religion belong the first fruits of music, for as an art it is

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the child of the Church—born of her and nourished with a parent's care. Many of its most ordinary technical ways and resources were discovered or invented primarily in response to the needs of the Church: for example, Counterpoint, Harmony, and Form. Hundreds of the Masters were trained as ecclesiastics or, at any rate, were steeped in the spirit and traditions of the Church. Thus, to the Church should belong the best that music has to give. We can carry this debt even back of the Christian era. It is not too much to say that worship began with the Psalms. Before Christianity, as has already been shown, it was known only to Judaism, and thus sprang out of the same soil as the Psalms. It was twin-born with them; or rather, in the beginning they were one. Truly, the Psalm-singing Churches should lead rather than lag in the development and enrichment of this great sacred art. We must ever remember that a Psalm is something more than its words. Beyond the words it is an atmosphere. This is a mark of its inspiration. So, to interpret a Psalm we want great music—music that will bring us that atmosphere, that will give us, as it were, what is between the lines. Side by side with the appreciation of sacred music should go an appreciation of the verse form of Hebrew poetry. The true poetic structure of each Psalm must be grasped before musical interpretation is possible. In our effort to "fit" music to Psalms we are too apt to seek only correspondence of "sentiment," resting satisfied if we succeed in getting plaintive melody to plaintive words, joyous melody to joyous words, and so on throughout the gamut of emotions. Now the "sentiment" is not the whole of a Psalm or of any poem. Form, or structure, enters equally into its character. Perhaps it is even the distinctive mark. The Psalmist paid minute attention to it, varying the structure with greatest care to express different shades and degrees of feeling, oftentimes in the same Psalm. Therefore, a Psalm is not interpreted whose exact thought only is given; the feeling bound up with its structure must also be realized, for "Hebrew poetry carries its lyric rhythm into the very thought itself."

Not all of the Psalms can be properly interpreted by tunes of one meter, whatever that meter may be. The idea that the whole Psalter may be thrown indiscriminately into a half-dozen standard meters is most erroneous. Such treatment necessarily destroys the unity and ignores the natural cleavage in many a Psalm. Ideally, the meter should vary even at times in the same Psalm in order to approximate its native form. What is wanted is such an exhibition of the general structure of each Psalm or part of a Psalm as shall make possible the particular musical treatment required. The Church is to be congratulated upon the results achieved in this direction by the Joint Committee on Psalm Revision.

But there are obvious limitations in a metrical version intended for general use in public worship. The Hebrew verse system, unique as it is by reason of its winding and intricate parallelisms, baffles the mechanism of our English verse and throws us back upon prose translations. There is, therefore, a fine opportunity here for choirs and composers of choir music in a comparatively unoccupied field. Such will find rich suggestion and material for the interpretation of the Psalms in Professor Moulton's works, particularly the opening chapters of his "Literary Study of the Bible" and his "Modern Reader's Bible"; also in Bishop Westcott's "Paragraph Psalter," which is an able attempt to exhibit the poetic structure of the Psalms for use in the musical service of the Church of England.

This suggests to us the place of the choir in the interpretation of the Psalms. The choir has indeed an important duty toward the Psalms and toward the people. For one thing, it is given to the choir to make available for public worship the inexhaustible treasure of classic music which was inspired by, and is indissolubly bound up with, the Psalms, but which is impracticable for congregational use. This is, perhaps, the chief function of the choir. Besides, many of the Psalms or parts of Psalms were evidently written for choir interpretation, and all furnish opportunity for highest skill. In the Psalter the "Sons of Asaph"

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have a priceless heritage, giving them standing and unbounded field for service wherever Israel's God is praised.

But the Psalms belong peculiarly to the people. They are to be sung, not to the people, but by the people. "Let all the people praise," is their keynote. The choir, even in exercising its function of interpreter for the people, is to remember that it is yet of the people—"a specialized segment of the congregation itself," and must so sing that the congregation may appropriate the singing as if it were its own. The center of Protestant worship has always been its congregational singing. Luther clung tenaciously to the choir, recognizing spiritual possibilities and requirements in praise beyond the power of the people as a whole to achieve, but his chief activity in the direction of music was to provide opportunity for singing by the congregation. So well did he succeed that his enemies declared it was this power of united song rather than preaching that produced the Reformation. Of course, that was an overstatement, but, at any rate, one of the wings on which the great movement sped was the singing by all the people. Particularly was this true wherever the Psalter was used for praise. It has been pointed out again and again that Presbyterian Psalmody has always been conducted by the people themselves, rather than by any order distinct from them. The Psalms seem to have the power to call out, and in a wonderful way become, the voice of the people. And who shall say, as these Songs of the Ages roll up from the hearts and throats of a consecrated host, that it is not the voice of God?

If space were given to refer to other matters related to the setting of the Psalms to music, one would like to utter a warning against our yielding to the same tendencies that are producing the cheap and trashy literature of the day. In order to popularize we must not stultify the Psalms by dressing them up in trifling melodies and musical slang. A Psalm in any but noble music is an exotic. We have not improved on the "plaine tune" the liturgy of our fathers prescribed if we lose the dignity and worshipfulness it certainly possessed.

In our effort to escape the snail pace of the old-time precentor with his tortuous grace notes and millennial pauses we need to guard against confusing hurry with promptness in singing. Certainly the Psalms should have movement, but we need not send them out on the latest two-step to enable them to keep our modern pace. With the Psalter in our hands it is ours

"To hold the spirit of the Age  
Against the spirit of the Time."

Then, there is the matter of association between Psalm and tune. Sometimes words and melody are so sacredly wedded that it is almost heartless to tear them asunder. A particular tune by reason of long association comes to interpret a Psalm for a large number of believers as nothing else can. One need not acknowledge relationship to the old lady of whom Dr. Guthrie tells, who vowed she "wad sing the Psalms o' Daavit to the *tunes* o' Daavit, an' naething else," in order to sympathize with the protest that has recently risen from several quarters against a too rapid substitution of new tunes for old where the old have become fused with particular words. While we must keep ourselves open of heart to the new when it is also the better, and must provide freshness and variety in our praise service, there ought to be permitted us more or less permanent associations in sacred song, if anywhere; some at least that will last from childhood to the grave, such as will furnish rallying points for the emotions in days of sorrow or loneliness or doubt.

It would be easy to go afield. There is much that one would like to say. The whole subject of worship music is most engaging—full of profit and illumination to the preacher. It richly repays study, whether one be technically trained or not. Fortunately there is being produced a very satisfactory literature on it. Pratt's "Musical Ministries," Breed's "History and Use of Hymns and Hymn Tunes," and especially Curwen's "Studies in Worship Music" will open up the subject admirably for the average reader. Perhaps some day we may have a chair of sacred

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music in our theological seminaries. No study or other effort should be deemed too arduous that will help us rise to the height of our great Book of Praise. As ministers especially, we must exert a steady pressure toward high ideals of worship music. The ideals of the people are not likely to be higher than ours. The heart of our denominational position on the Psalms is fitness in praise, and the essence of praise is the offering up of life's music—the very best of it—unto God.



## OBJECTIONS TO THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF THE PSALMS IN WORSHIP

BY PROFESSOR JAMES A. GRIER, D. D., LL. D., BELLEVUE, PA.

**T**HERE are a number of these, of various grades of importance, and yet all told they do not vitiate the claim that the Psalms are suitable and exclusive matter of praise.

*First.* The first objection is that the Old Testament appointment of the Psalms as praise has been abrogated. To this may be replied that it is not possible to show it. By common consent the "psalms" of Ephesians and Colossians are those of the Old Testament, and, as has been shown in other papers, "hymns and spiritual songs" are also a part of the Psalter. Their appointment, therefore, has been practically renewed. Nothing else is known to the New Testament as material of praise, whether we speak of the hymn our Lord and His Apostles sang at the institution of the Lord's Supper, or the Psalms the Corinthians were to announce at their meetings, or the alleged remains of hymns in the Epistles. Moreover, what is suitable for praise in one dispensation is in another. God Who receives it does not change. The Psalms are on all hands acknowledged to be the noblest book of praises ever prepared. This is undoubtedly true. Why then should they be set aside? If it is merely meant that additions to the Psalms are now permitted, not only must this fact be shown, but if it were, it would not render the use of the Psalter less obligatory. Practically by most hymn-singers the Psalter is discarded. Yet nothing but the ceremonial and the judicial law of the Jews has by the New Testament dispensation been set aside; the moral law is still binding, and so is the law of praise, which is not simply Jewish, but universal.

*Second.* It is objected that the Psalms are not suitable to New Testament times. This is a strange objection. It would set aside even the reading and preaching of the Old Testament. Our Lord thought the Psalms were suitable, and used them in connection with the chief ordinance of the dispensation. Paul and James also thought they were. The Psalms contain more about Christ than almost any other section of the Scripture, displaying the glorious Person of our Lord, His threefold office, His tenderness and compassion, and the events of His life in great detail. Nowhere else is the heart of Christ so fully unfolded. Here are laid forth the inmost thoughts, sorrows, and conflicts of our Lord. Nowhere else is the divine character so fully exhibited, and so full utterance given to the needy and trustful soul. From the beginning of the Christian Church the Psalms have been the chief vehicle of praise. They have nurtured the most profound and vigorous piety known in the ages. They were the songs of the Reformation periods and of the martyrs. The witnesses for Christ have not gone to their death singing praises in songs made by men, but staying their souls upon their Redeemer by the iron tonic of the praises His Spirit gave to men. Talk about the babbling of hymns when a man is called to lay down his life under the hands of persecuting violence! The wide use of human songs is chiefly modern. The heroic Church of the entire era has been a Psalm-singer, and to-day the Psalms breed a robust piety not inferior to any other of the times. Unless the objector wishes to discount his Lord's example, the precepts of Paul and James, and the great mass of witnesses and confessors of Christ, he had better drop his objection into the limbo of useless things.

Another branch of the same objection is that the Psalms are Jewish, and hence not suitable to our times. One high-spirited divine, in a convention for the union of the Presbyterian Churches, when Biblical Psalmody was proposed, with some asperity dissented, saying, "No, sir, I am not a Jew. I am a Christian, sir, and this is a Christian convention, and the

Churches represented here are Christian Churches." So, because he was a Christian he was not satisfied with the hymns which satisfied Christ. He is a specimen of many good men who misconceive things. Did you ever think of it—all our salvation is Jewish? The Church of the dispensation is on a Jewish model. The Saviour was a Jew. The Apostles were all Jews. The Bible is a Jewish book; from beginning to end there is not a Gentile syllable in it. Even Luke writes his Gospel as he received it from Paul. The mass of the New Testament is touched and colored by the Old Testament, the Jewish Scriptures. What a Jew Peter was in his Epistles! How fully does the Epistle to the Romans follow upon Jewish lines and deal with Old Testament personages and types! Who does not know that the Epistle to the Hebrews is saturated with Jewish thought? Everywhere throughout the New Testament you have altars, and sacrifices, and priests, and prophets, and Jewish history, and Jewish characters, until at the end the grand Revelation closes with descriptions borrowed from the Old Testament prophets, Ezekiel and Daniel. In some of the New Testament Books there is as much distinctly Jewish thought as in the Psalms. However, the objection is not so serious in the minds of our friends as they suppose, judging from their own hymn-books. For example, in one of the Methodist books we find many such words as these:

"Thou very Paschal Lamb,  
Whose blood for us was shed,  
Through Whom we out of bondage came,  
Thy ransomed people led."

"Thy offering still continues new,  
Thy vesture keeps its crimson hue,  
Thy priesthood still remains the same."

Take even old Coronation, v. 3:

"Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,  
Ye ransomed from the fall,  
Hail Him Who saves you by His grace,  
And crown Him Lord of all."

“Our pilgrim hosts shall safely land  
On Canaan’s peaceful shore.”

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“On Jordan’s stormy banks I stand,  
And cast a wistful eye  
To Canaan’s fair and happy land,  
Where my possessions lie.”

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“Here I’ll raise my Ebenezer,  
Hither by Thy help I’ve come.”

---

“You daughters of Zion, declare, have you seen  
The star that on Israel shone?  
Say, if in your tents my Beloved hath been  
And where with His flocks He has gone.”

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“The roses of Sharon, the lilies that grow,  
The cedars of Lebanon bow at His feet.”

---

“Let us sing the King Messiah,  
King of righteousness and peace.”

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“Shout the glad tidings, exultantly sing,  
Jerusalem triumphs, Messiah is King.”

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“Hallelujah to the Lamb Who bled for our pardon,  
We’ll praise Him again when we pass over Jordan.”

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“Before Thine altar, Lord,  
My harp and song shall sound.”

So it goes, until we almost feel constrained to say, “What Jews these hymn-singers are!” The fact is, all such objections are captious, and are offered for lack of something better. In the light of the New Testament these Old Testament Psalms, all of which refer to the Messiah and His sufferings in the past tense, are as truly “gospel hymns” as the Romans and Hebrews are Books of the larger gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

*Third.* It is said the name of Jesus does not appear in the

Psalter. This is shown to be essentially incorrect, in that He is there called the Anointed, the Son, the Shepherd, and by various other names is *personally* distinguished. His work and mission are fully set forth, and everywhere He is viewed as the God of salvation, or the Saviour of men. It is a strange smallness in argument which insists on five vocal sounds, "Jesus, Saviour," as being necessary to a satisfactory psalmody, when all the fullness of their meaning is displayed in the Book which is refused. Many names of the Saviour are there, and an inspired delineation of His saving work, but these are counted valueless unless a certain vocable, meaning no more, is there found. What is Jesus, the Man of Nazareth, except He be Messiah, discharging the mission of salvation? For what is He Messiah but to save? Why is He revealed as Son but to present Him as Saviour? For what purpose is He presented as Shepherd except to show His care for His people in salvation? And so I might proceed. There is a feebleness of sentimentalism about the character that can haggle over the need of a shadow where there is all the substance which nothing but the tonic of the Psalms themselves can cure.

*Fourth.* It is urged again that hymns are not forbidden, and hence the Psalms are not exclusive praise. Is that the sound principle of worship? Scarcely. It is sound doctrine that we offer the things required. Indeed, a thing required forbids all other things. That was Cain's trouble—he offered a thing not required, and hence forbidden. The worship of the Virgin Mary is not expressly forbidden, only in the same way as hymns, by something else being required. The seven sacraments of Rome are not forbidden. The confessional is not forbidden. Prayer for the dead is not forbidden. The ancient custom of salt in the mouth at baptism is not forbidden. The dissipations of modern life, such as gambling and dancing, are not expressly forbidden. Altars, and vestments, and candles, and bowings, and other mummery of ritualism are not forbidden. Most of these things have yet been introduced into worship. Does the lack

of prohibition make them right? It is not a question of prohibition, but a question of divine commandment. Has God commanded these things in His worship? The doctrine of the Confession and of Scripture is that God must *prescribe* a thing in order to its use as a veritable part of His worship. The question is, Will hymns stand the test? In the light of what has been said it is evident they will not.

*Fifth.* It is said that the singing of the gospel is a very useful exercise, and hence should be allowed in praise, and hence an exclusive Psalmody is not required. Observe: (1) Singing the gospel may indeed be a useful exercise to men, but usefulness to men is not the test of praise to God. (2) Singing the gospel with the purpose of moving men toward Christ, as the evangelists claim, takes the exercise out of the sphere of divine praise. (3) That singing the gospel cannot be praise to God is evident because the gospel is good news to *men*. It was never given from heaven to be sent back as a tribute to the throne. Where is the praise to God in a hymn expounding and applying to a congregation repentance, or faith, or the duty of a resolution to do God's will? People who call this sort of thing "praise service" do not know the use of words. (4) The singing of the gospel with a view to the congregation is but musical preaching of the gospel. Even while it often occupies the place of praises in the sanctuary, it is yet but a preaching service in which we all join. (5) As to the propriety of thus obeying the command, "Preach the Word," nothing directly antagonistic will now be said, but only a few things to shed further light on its bearing upon the ordinance of praise. It may be doubted whether the usefulness of the gospel truth in such hymns is as great as is imagined. The measure of truth in any one song is exceedingly small, and the exercise is always, or nearly always, connected with the manly and clearly Scriptural act of standing up and expounding the Word to the people; so that it is difficult to trace results to the singing. The very most which can with comprehensive truthfulness be said is that such musical exer-

cises illumine and give variety to the occasion, and so prepare the way for the preacher. The office of mere melody in music is benign and helpful to a congregation, without regard particularly to the associated sentiment, the words. It is an attractive adjunct, but not a converting agent. Quite as effective revivals have been held where there was no singing of the gospel, but only preaching by the aid of the Holy Ghost. There were no Sankeys at Pentecost, nor in the early missionary ages of the Christian era, nor in the Reformation period, nor in the great revival of 1859 in Ireland. "Singing the gospel," while not a modern discovery, yet partakes of the emotional and somewhat unsubstantial type of Christian work characteristic of our times. Any work must lack essential marrow that practically and continually drops out the ordinance of praise. Where the gospel is "sung" there is generally little or no praise. God is not so much in mind as men. Even if we concede somewhat of good to the use of "gospel hymns," those who stand for the ordinance of praise in its purity and entirety, as we do, cannot afford to use them in public service, because (a) *they take the actual place of praise to God*, which is robbing Him for men. We must remember the right of the Lord of the sanctuary. The musical service is not alone, as so many think, for developing good feelings in the singer and in the congregation, but also for presenting to God His due. *Praise is worship*. Do not forget it. It is as truly so as prayer. We have as much right to sing the gospel instead of prayer as instead of praise. It is more distinctly an act of worship than any other part of the church service. We must not allow any effort to reach men by the gospel to minimize or supplant the worship offered that Being on Whose blessing all our efforts to save men depend. His benevolence will not yield His dues even to gospel sentiment sung for the benefit of sinners. (b) We cannot afford to use them because *they would take the place of Psalms in the minds of the unthinking*. Inevitably our use of "gospel hymns" would be counted praise and an abandonment of our doctrine of Psalmody. We

might explain until we were weary the difference between "praise" and "singing the gospel," and would fail of popular impression. The pastor who allows his congregation to preach the gospel by singing, or any soloist to do so, thereby in the popular mind abandons Scriptural Psalmody. The thinking minds will recognize the difference, but the mass will not see it. No good is to be gained, therefore, by the practice, but only injury.

*Sixth.* It is objected that we may make prayers, and why not praises? Some observations are here in point. (1) There is a warrant for making prayer; there is none for making hymns. (2) Inspiration has furnished Psalms, praises; it has not furnished prayers. They are to be made as required. (3) We have the promise of the Spirit for composing our prayers; but none for composing praises: "Likewise the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought," etc. (4) If praises and prayer are on precisely the same ground, praise must be extempore. Proper prayer is: there is no warrant for liturgical prayers. However, the hymn-singing denominations do not leave their people to extemporize praises—they give them a hymn-book; *i. e.*, they recognize the difference between prayer and praise. (5) More fundamentally, prayer and praise are two distinct things—quite as much so as preaching and praise. Yet preaching may contain some elements of prayer in it, and also of praise. (*a*) In praise there is a musical ordering of the voice; prayer is only simple articulation, or even a mental address. (*b*) Prayer is chiefly the presentation of requests, confession of sins, thanksgiving for mercies; praise is, generally, the heralding of divine excellences, of divine glory as displayed in creation, providence, and redemption. In inspired Psalmody may be found matter which might elsewhere enter into prayer; but specifically in its place in the Psalms it is psalmody; it is not prayer. It is not offered as prayer. It is offered as a tribute to God. If a given composition were mere prayer it would not be musically offered. Praise is cast into permanent forms;



it is not so with prayer; and praise is so cast in order alike to express the feelings of worship and to arouse them, and to be a coin of worship ready at hand which God will receive. The primary reference of praise is to God. The primary reference of prayer is to the wants of man. Praise is permanent because God is unchangeable, but prayer partakes of the mutable condition of men. To come close to the question as to why we may sing the praises of God in inspired prayers and not in those of uninspired men, you will note, on the one hand, that the forms of prayer in the Psalter are not really prayers. They are inspired praises in the form of prayer. On the other hand, the prayers which men propose and offer as praises are not inspired, not appointed as praises. This makes a vast difference between the prayers of the Psalter and those of the hymn-book. If, however, anyone wishes to pray to God in meter of human composition, there is no objection; however, he is not to count it praise; it will not be praise because he sings it; nor will the fact that the Psalms are sometimes in the form of prayer be an authorizing precedent. He lacks inspiration, and has no commission to provide psalmody for himself or anyone else.

*Seventh.* It is complained that the Psalms are obscure and hard to be understood. So is the arithmetic, so is the grammar; shall we, therefore, throw them out of school and substitute something that can never usefully take their place? Is religion the shallowest thing under heaven, and must it appeal chiefly to the shallows of the mind? The Romish Church puts in the same plea, and removes the whole Bible from the common people. The Psalms are not so obscure as the Book of Romans. Shall we, therefore, set it aside? There are some hard things in Peter's Epistles. Shall we, therefore, have an expurgated edition? It is thought that the Psalter is too difficult for the children. How about the whole Bible? Shall the ordinance of praise alone be whittled down to the measure of babyhood? Were the children of the early Psalm-singing Churches less Biblically and spiritually cultivated because they did not have little

soft and sappy religious songs? Is childhood to be brought into divine experiences by weak and attenuated, utterly slimy pious ditties? In point of fact, is the childhood of other Churches more spiritually vigorous than our own? What rings in your thoughts when away by yourself, and what springs to your lips when you need an apt quotation on a religious subject, so readily as these meter Psalms? And they beget in children a sense of reverence for the great God, and an impression of His gracious majesty, that a world full of children's hymn-books would fail to awaken; and there are few things so desirable as that the proper views of God be given to the youthful mind. No Book of God's Word is so easily understood and so readily leaves an impression as these Hebrew Psalms.

*Eighth.* It is urged again that Churches that have used hymns have been greatly prospered. True; and for all progress of the gospel we are thankful. However, the numerical argument is never in itself a conclusive one. If it is, the Devil has ever since the fall had the argument with him. He will not by and by. Mohammedanism has the argument now against Christianity; Roman Catholicism has it against Protestantism; Arminianism has it against Calvinism; and the former age of the Church has it against these last times as to inspired matter of praise, for the day was when almost no hymns were sung. How about superior numbers then, proving hymns were wrong? The fact is that truth may be with the minority in any case. How is it to-day in the battle on temperance? If anyone asks particularly how it comes that hymn-singing Churches have progressed more rapidly than Psalm-singing, I can only reply: (1) It by no means follows from the use of hymns. There have been, besides, the preaching of the gospel and earnest prayer and very intelligent use of many helpful agencies. (2) It is always true that God will bless men and Churches which hold error—none are perfect,—and which couple with that truth they hold wise, philosophical, and businesslike ways of work. (3) No Psalm-singing Churches within the period when the rivalry has been between

them and the Churches using hymns have permitted themselves to be perfectly intelligent in their methods of work, in their adaptation to the masses of men, or, until lately, in putting the Psalms into popular modern form. They have called themselves "witness-bearing" Churches, and they have too often borne witness in a very meager, narrow sort of way. Besides, Scriptural Psalmody has not been permitted to stand by itself on its own merits, but has always been associated with other things, against some of which the wickedness of men has rebelled, and against others the common sense of men. The Psalm-singing Churches have generally antagonized modern revivals, and spent their strength in criticising methods useful to other Churches, and have lost ground, as they ought; they have held to the offensive unwritten tenet of "occasional hearing," and have striven to enforce it; they have persisted in uselessly requiring pieces of lead and bits of pasteboard as passports to the Lord's Table; they have made "close communion" both a matter of defense and offense; they have refused choirs and have persisted in "lining out," and largely declined musical culture; they have held fast to "tables" at communion long after their usefulness has disappeared; they have refused the sound of the harp and organ; they have saddled on, in some of their denominations, specialties of ideal reform and made them terms of communion; they have carried over from the old country all sorts of quarrels that have no more business in this country than the principle of Church "establishment"; and thus in a hundred ways they have conspired to make their common denominational specialty, which is Scriptural Psalmody, unpopular. The Psalms have not, since they have had special champions here, been on trial; but the *Psalms and a multitude of other things* by which the Psalter has been hidden from view. It has been practically condemned as a book of praise because of its company. These things are mostly in the past. We have now a magnificent arrangement of the matter of praise, the crudity of the old-time poetry has been largely remedied, and the songs of God are more fully appealing

to the people of God upon their merits. The Psalter for the first time since hymns were introduced into this land is having a chance, and there are tokens of popular approbation.

*Ninth.* Some fall back on themselves in face of all argument and settle the matter by saying, "I cannot feel that it is wrong to sing hymns." This objector is a hopeless case. If a man will not use his brains in his religion, Psalm-singers cannot do much for him, nor yet consistent hymn-singers. If any man is convinced that the weight of Scriptural argument demands Scriptural Psalmody, he is not at liberty to follow his feelings. He is to follow what appears to him to be the teachings of revealed truth. He is not to be a law unto himself. The argument for the Psalms is objective—it lies outside the singers; it is not subjective—spun from their inner selves. Whenever the latter process, subjectivizing, is largely adopted, men get away from the authority of God, the dicta of revelation, and become a law unto themselves. Some men refuse God's foreknowledge of free actions because they cannot *feel* it to be possible; yet the Word of God is clear on it. Some refuse the doctrine of strict divine justice to sinners in the face of revelation because it does not consist with their ideas of God. Some determine whether certain writings are inspired by their own feelings. And so it goes. The feelings are a very variable and contradictory guide. It is the rationalizing process of the feelings which creates so many views and schisms in the Church. Loyalty to the revealed truth is demanded. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." If men sing hymns on what they believe to be Scriptural grounds, their behavior merits what it receives—candid, exegetical consideration. But if men act in anything from mere feeling, they put themselves outside the canons of Christian judgment and controversy. Mere mysticism can play no part in determining the will of God.

## OBJECTIONS TO THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF THE PSALMS IN WORSHIP

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**T**HE historic position of the Psalm-singing Churches is the center of attack on the part of our brethren who differ from us in faith and practice. They are free to admit the devotional value of the Psalter, but disputing our position touching it as the divinely authorized and exclusive manual of praise, they offer sundry objections to its use. At the outset it may be well for us to remember, and likewise remind the objector, that if it is demonstrated that the Psalms are the divinely authorized and exclusive manual of praise, all objections must be waived, for in that case the objection is against God's appointment, and not against our position. God has from the beginning claimed the right to regulate the approach of sinners to Himself, and to prescribe all the forms and ordinances of His own worship. This unquestionable divine prerogative, which has been so frequently and fearfully emphasized and vindicated, is fitted to silence forever all objections to the use of the Psalms. Should anyone be found questioning the divine sovereignty in this matter, let him hear the word—"Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" Our task is to notice some of the objections offered to the exclusive use of the Psalms in worship.

### Objection 1. Their Appointment Abrogated.

There are those who, while admitting that the Psalms were divinely appointed to be sung in praise to God, affirm that their appointment has been abrogated. At once we ask, By whom? So far as we have been able to discover, God has not given even

the slightest hint in His Word to the effect that He has, or ever will, set aside the Psalms inspired by His Spirit to make way for an uninspired hymnology. Having appointed them to be sung in His worship, He only has a right to set them aside. Evidently He has not done so, and for man to do so is to set aside His authority and "to turn worship into rebellion." So far from God having abrogated their appointment, we find that He has set his seal to their use in the New Testament Church with such commands as "Is any merry, let him sing Psalms." In Colossians iii. 16 and Eph. v. 19, whatever else may be included, it is certain that the use of the Psalms is enjoined upon those Churches. But we are confident that it can be, and has been, successfully maintained that the expression, "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs," refers to the inspired Psalter, and so its use is enjoined upon the Christian Church. So far from the divine appointment of the Psalms having been abrogated, it has thus been plainly reaffirmed in the New Testament. If it be maintained that their appointment was abrogated by limitation, we ask, Where is the limitation? There is no such limitation in the Mosaic law. The Mosaic dispensation was hoary with age before Israel's sweet singer was heard upon the slopes of Bethlehem, and the Psalter was not complete until perhaps a thousand years after Moses. There is certainly no limitation in the subject matter of the songs themselves, as anyone must know who is at all familiar with the contents of the Psalter. That they have not been set aside by any substitute of God's appointment is evident from the fact that there is no Psalter in the New Testament, nor was anyone commissioned by God to act as "the sweet singer" of the Christian Church.

#### Objection 2. Hymns Not Forbidden.

Another objection offered to the exclusive use of the Psalms is that hymns are not forbidden, and therefore may be used in the praise service of the Church. This objection has to do with the Scriptural law of worship. Briefly, that law is, "that divine warrant is necessary for every element of doctrine, government, and

worship in the Church; that is, whatever in these spheres is not commanded in the Scriptures, either expressly or by good and necessary consequences from their statements, is forbidden. The statement in the Larger Catechism, Question 109, is "The sins forbidden in the Second Commandment are all devising, counseling, commanding, or in anywise approving any religious worship not instituted by God alone." The Confession of Faith, Chapter xxi., Section 1, sets forth the law as follows: "The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will that He may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representations, or in any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures." In Deuteronomy iv. 2 there is the positive declaration, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I commanded you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it," and in Deuteronomy xii. 32, "What things soever I command you, observe to do it; thou shalt not add thereto nor diminish from it." These and like Scriptures emphasize the fact that the question is not "What is forbidden," but "What is commanded," for the Lord's commandment is both inclusive and exclusive—"Ye shall not add thereto nor diminish therefrom." "The law is not that we are at liberty to act when God has not spoken, but just the contrary; we have no right to act when He is silent. It will not answer to say in justification of some element of worship that God has not expressly prohibited it; we must produce a divine warrant for it. The absence of such a warrant is an interdiction. We cannot without guilt transcend divine appointment. No discretion is allowed the Church to introduce into her worship what God has not instituted and appointed." The question is not then, "Has the use of hymns been forbidden," but "Has their use in the worship of God been commanded?" What God has commanded is to be our guiding principle, and it is well for us that we have such a chart to steer by in this matter, for, as Calvin observes, "When we are left at liberty, all we are able to do is to go astray." For illustration of the truth of this state-

ment of Calvin, and of the peril involved in the reasoning found in this objection, we have but to note the corrupt worship of the Church of Rome. Abandon the principle that God alone has a right to prescribe His worship, and the door is open wide for the incoming of all manner of human devices in the worship of the Church of God.

### Objection 3. Psalms Not Definitely Christian.

It is further objected that the Psalms are not suitable or sufficient for New Testament worshipers, that they are too obscure and hard to be understood, that they are not definitely Christian, and therefore that there is need of a Christian supplement. The objectors as a rule are not consistent, for surely if the Psalms are not suitable to be *sung* by New Testament saints, they are not suitable to be *read*. But anyone who has attended the services of hymn-singing congregations cannot fail to have noticed that in public worship the Psalms are read almost universally. Evidently the reason for this is their suitability to arouse the devotional spirit in the worshipers. It is further evident that this objection arises from a misconception of the meaning and purpose of praise. The main object of praise is to declare and magnify the excellences of the divine character, as well as to give expression to every variety of devotional feeling which the contemplation of these perfections is designed to quicken and call forth. Our God is the unchanging Jehovah, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. This fact alone is sufficient to prove that the Psalms which were suitable for the celebration of His praises in the days of David, Isaiah, Christ, and His Apostles are still suitable channels through which His people may voice their grateful praise. To admit their divine inspiration is to admit that "the Spirit of God could in the days of David prepare songs better suited to New Testament times than it is possible for uninspired men to prepare now." Had the Lord Jesus not counted the Psalms suitable for use in the praise service of His Church through all ages it is hardly conceivable that in the supreme hour of His life He should have sung a Psalm with His disciples and



upon the cross used the language of a Psalm in uttering the cry of His broken heart, and again in committing Himself to God. As Lightfoot says, "He Who could have inspired every disciple to be a David sings the Psalms of David," and by the Spirit He gave commandment to His Church to sing them. As to their sufficiency for New Testament worshipers, I cannot do better than quote these words from Dr. Davidson: "There is no case in which the saint will ever find himself in which he cannot find a Psalm suited to his condition and calculated to minister to his edification and comfort. Is the believer's heart broken under a sense of sin and unworthiness? Let him sing such a Psalm as the Fifty-First. Does a sense of the power of indwelling sin oppress him? Such Psalms as the Sixth or Thirty-Eighth will utter his laboring spirit aright to God. Has he a peculiar tenderness and condition? The plaintive accents of the Twenty-Fifth, and others like it, will be an unction of sweetness upon his palpitating heart. Do the great Redeemer's sufferings and humiliation and love engage his devotional thought? Such Psalms as the Twentieth, Twenty-Second, and Fortieth will guide and elevate, console and sanctify him. Is he under the hidings of God's countenance? The pent-up feelings of his soul will find utterance through such a channel as is opened up to him in the Forty-Second and Forty-Third hymns of Israel's sweet singer. Is he a stranger in a strange land, and deprived, for a season, of that most precious of all earth's privileges, the sanctuary of God and the sweet society of saints? The vehement forth-goings of a yearning spirit that refuses to be comforted will turn to the Twenty-Seventh, or Eighty-Fourth, or to some other suitable spiritual song in the collection. Is sickness upon him and death imminent? God has given Psalms like the Thirty-Ninth, Thirty-Second, and Ninetieth. Are enemies and oppositions and difficulties around him? He cannot miss a song to suit his case; the Thirty-Fourth and Ninety-First and the One Hundred and Twenty-First will fill his soul with a restful peace. Does providence prosper him? Does heaven smile on his person

and on his home? God has tuned his voice to thanksgiving in such a hymn as the Sixty-Fifth of the Psalter. Is his faith clear and calm whilst dangers and sufferings pour the very shadows of death thick and dark around him? A hundred Psalms at once, led by the Twenty-Third, with a hundred tongues utter forth his sublime composure and heroic faith. Does palefaced pestilence stalk abroad? The Ninety-First Psalm will tell of the quiet of the good man's soul. Are the judgments of God imminent over a guilty world? Then will the good man, strong in the power and love of his God, adopt the language of Luther, and say to the trembling ones around him, 'Come, let us sing the Forty-Sixth Psalm.' The Psalter of God insufficient, unsuited to the New Testament worshiper! No one who is acquainted with its vast treasures of praise will so assert. Millions can testify to its sufficiency.

Touching the charge that they are obscure and hard to understand, we may say that they are no more difficult to understand when sung than when read, and our objectors hardly refuse to read these devotional lyrics. They are no more obscure than many parts of the New Testament, notably Romans and the Revelation. Multitudes of devoted saints find them easy of understanding and feed their souls to fatness upon their blessed truths. Dr. Horsley has truly said, "Of all the Books of the Old Testament, the Book of Psalms is the most universally read; but I fear as little as any understood. This cannot be ascribed to any extraordinary obscurity of these sacred songs, for of all the prophetic parts of the Scriptures they are certainly the most perspicuous." It was but a just encomium of the Psalter that came from the pen of one of the early Fathers, that "it is a complete system of divinity for the use and edification of the common people of the Christian Church."

The objection that the Psalms are not definitely Christian amounts to a denial of the presence of Christ in them. But he who offers such an objection must be pitifully ignorant of the Psalter. Jesus Christ in His person and work, in His divine dig-

nity and humiliation, sufferings and death, resurrection and ascension into heaven, is the great subject of the Psalms, and was evidently so understood to be by the early Christians. Bishop Alexander, in his "Witness of the Psalms to Christ," tells us, as a result of a careful examination, that reference is made to the Book of Psalms, either by quotation or otherwise, in no fewer than 286 passages in the New Testament. It is inconceivable that the Spirit would have made such use of the Psalms in the New Testament if they are not definitely Christian, and it is a noteworthy fact that the life of the Early Church seemed to be steeped in the Psalms.

But it is especially objected that the name of Jesus is lacking. The name of God does not appear in the Book of Esther, but he is blind who cannot see the hand of God in that book of providence. Jesus is in the Psalms, though He is not yet called by that name. He is there as Saviour, set forth fully in His three-fold office of prophet, priest, and king. He is there as shepherd, feeding, leading, and protecting His people. Says one, "I am persuaded that the Psalms are nothing else so much as they are just the outpourings of the soul of the man Christ Jesus; all the humiliations, trials, persecutions, sorrows, and agonies of His life are uttered here; all the praise and joys and triumphs of His redemptive work are here given a voice and words." "There is not," says Bishop Horsley, "a page in this Book of Psalms in which the pious reader will not find his Saviour, if he reads with a view of finding Him." "We are in these Psalms," says another, "brought, as it were, into His closet, are made the witnesses of His secret devotions, and are enabled to see even the inward workings of His heart." An eminent writer (Dr. Alexander) has said, "The golden key of the Psalter lies in a pierced hand."

It is further objected in this connection that the Psalms speak only of a Saviour to come, and so we need songs that present a clearer and fuller revelation of Christ. The one offering this objection betrays his ignorance of the contents of the Psalter.

The fact is that the Psalms never speak of the Saviour as yet to come in the flesh; and this very fact furnishes strong presumptive evidence that the Psalms were designed for the Christian dispensation. An examination of Psalms ii., xvi., xviii., xx., xxi., xl., xxiv., xlvii., lxxii., cxxxii., etc., will suffice to substantiate the statement that, save where His Second Coming is referred to, the future tense is never used of our Lord in the Psalms. Evidently the objector has failed to note that this objection militates against his own position, for if, as assumed, Psalms which present a Saviour yet to come are not suited to New Testament times, it follows that a large number of the Psalms are better adapted to the worship of the Church now than then, since in them the Saviour is represented as having already come, as having suffered, died, risen, and ascended on high. And as for songs that present a fuller revelation of Christ, what fuller revelation do we need than that given by the Spirit of God in the Psalms. "In these Psalms," says Jonathan Edwards, "David speaks of the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension into heaven, satisfaction, and intercession of Christ; His glorious benefits in this life and that which is to come; His union with the Church; the blessedness of the Church in Him; the calling of the Gentiles; the future glory of the Church, near the end of the world; and the coming of Christ to final judgment."

But it is further objected that the Psalms are essentially Jewish, clouded and encumbered with Jewish imagery. In general we may say that the objection might be urged with equal force against much of the New Testament, notably the Epistle to the Hebrews, parts of Ephesians, Romans, and the Revelation. We freely admit that there is figurative language in the Psalms, but this offers no difficulty to the Christian who is conversant with the Word of God. Says one, "The whole Jewish economy spake of Christ; and the prophets, priests, and kings of Israel were not merely types of the Perfect One, but they were for the time that then was the visible human mediators of the revelation of salvation, and in and through them the One Mediator, the Son of

God, was working and teaching His Church." Through some of this imagery there have been opened to us the inmost thoughts, sorrows, sufferings, and conflicts of our Lord. "If you take away such figures as Israel, temple, priest, altar, sacrifice, house of God, etc., you destroy the very means by which God has been pleased to convey to men a knowledge of His salvation." But if consistent, the objector must discard many of his hymns as well as the Psalms, for he will find in them these same Jewish ideas, as for example, "Thou very paschal lamb," "The priesthood still remains the same," "Let us an altar raise," "Ye chosen seed of Israel's race," "Hallelujah to the Lamb."

#### Objection 4. The Psalms Savor of Vengeance.

Another objection is to the effect that the Bible Psalmody savors so much of law and vengeance that it is not so well adapted for the devotions of the believer as the hymnody of the Christian poet filled with the love of Jesus. We would remind the objector that the contents of the Psalter have distinct appointment in New Testament times as the Christian's hymn-book. Is it probable that the Lord Jesus would enjoin upon His Church the singing of songs which breathe a vindictive spirit? To allege that any of the Psalms breathe such a spirit is to bring a grave accusation against their Author, the Holy Spirit. "Did He move any of the Psalm-writers to express malicious feelings, and that under the guise of inspiration? He is certainly a very daring man who will bring such an accusation against the Spirit of God." Yet this has been done by Dr. Watts and others. Speaking of the Psalms, Dr. Watts says, "Some of them are almost opposite the spirit of the gospel. There are a thousand lines in the Book of Psalms which were not made for a Church in our days to assume as its own. I should rejoice to see David converted into a Christian. There are many hundred verses in the Book of Psalms which a Christian cannot properly assume in singing,—as Psalms lxviii., xiii., xvi., xxxvi.; and Psalms lxix. and cix. are so full of cursings that they hardly become a follower of the blessed Jesus." We have only to say to this that if the in-

spiration of these Psalms is admitted, then such language is nothing short of blasphemous. But it is a grievous mistake to suppose that these Psalms were dictated by a spirit of private animosity and revenge. No one can read the life story of David and note his magnanimous treatment of his arch-enemy, Saul, and yet suppose that he cherished sentiments of personal hatred and revenge. In most, if not all, of these Psalms, Christ is impersonated, as can be proved by quotations in the New Testament and by internal evidence. Christ Himself used the Sixty-Ninth and One Hundred and Ninth Psalms. "They are His very words, spoken by His Spirit, ages before His incarnation, concerning His betrayer and concerning His malicious and implacable foes." It is altogether remarkable, the use and the application of these songs in the New Testament. Compare Psalm lxix. 9 with John ii. 17, and Rom. xv. 3; verse 21 with Matt. xxvii. 34, 48; verses 22, 23, with Rom. xi. 9, 10; verse 25 with Acts i. 20; also Psalm cix. 3 with John xv. 25; verse 8 with Acts i. 16, 20. From these, and other comparisons that might be made, it is manifest that these Psalms are the language of the Holy Spirit, declaring beforehand the cruelty and malice of Christ's malignant enemies, and Christ's petitions and judgments against them. In singing these songs we purpose to praise the awful justice and righteous judgments of our divine Redeemer. Says Dr. James Harper, "There is a sickly sentimentalism which seeks the love of God above His justice, whereas justice is an exalted product of the highest love. In the Psalms there is a roundness of truth, and the Psalter would be incomplete if these Psalms to which such violent objection is taken were lacking." Says a writer in *The Methodist*, "One of the curiosities of skepticism is the assault that has been made upon the 'Imprecatory Psalms.' It was perhaps to be expected that an age which ran to sentimentalism, and ignored righteousness, should find little comfort in these Psalms. The Psalms are pitched everywhere on the key of Bible morality; they express the emotions of a soul in sympathy with the law of a righteous and holy God." The code of morals of the Old Testament was essen-

tially the same as of the New. The Ten Commandments were binding then as now. The indulgence of malicious feelings was condemned then as now. It will not be amiss to note that these Psalms to which objection is made are paralleled in the New Testament. Where in the compass of literature will you find such words as in Matthew xxiii. 33, "Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell?" Other Scriptures of like character are 1 Cor. xvi. 22; 2 Thess. i. 6-9; 2 Tim. iv. 14; Heb. x. 38; Rev. vi. 9, 10; xi. 16-18; xviii. 6. In the Psalms God is sovereign, righteous, terrible to the evil, but kind and gracious to the good. He is longsuffering to us in our errors, patient with us in our doubts. He lifts us up out of the pit of sin; He forgives our iniquities. Is the loving God made more loving in any hymn, song, or creed? Who as the Psalmist has so laid bare the tender, pitying heart of God? If we love righteousness and hate iniquity, if we are at heart loyal to God and the truth, we shall find only comforts, warnings, and very tender expostulations in the Psalms. But if God is righteous, if His moral law is as sure as gravitation, what can we expect from the inspired singer but sympathy with the divine indignation against the incorrigibly wicked? "As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when Thou awakest, Thou shalt despise their image."

#### Objection 5. Singing the Gospel Edifying.

It is claimed that singing the gospel is an edifying exercise; hence it should be allowed in praise; and so an exclusive Psalmody is an abridgment of Christian liberty. We have no disposition to deny that singing the gospel may be a useful exercise, stirring the emotions and so opening the heart to the truth and to Him Who is the truth. But singing the gospel to men and singing praise to God are two different things. Because singing the gospel may be edifying to men is no reason why we should set aside the Psalms which God has appointed for the celebration of His own praise. This is one of the very serious objections to the use of human composition in the praise service of the Church; singing the gospel to men takes the place of singing

praise to God. Thus we rob God of His due, and granting all the good results claimed for singing the gospel, we are guilty of that which has been condemned, viz., "doing evil that good may come." Singing the gospel to men is not praise to God, and no Christian is at liberty to interfere with God's appointment for His own praise. No Christian is at liberty to form his doctrinal belief, rules of life, and religious observances irrespective of the word and authority of Christ. Says Dr. Hodge, "Christian liberty is not an absolute liberty to do as we please, but a regulated liberty to obey God."

But it is asked, if human composition in praise to God is offensive to Him, how can we account for the fact that He uses such songs as a channel of the Spirit's influence in conversion and edification; and for the fact that the hymn-singing Churches are the largest and most numerous? Doubtless men have been converted under the singing of the gospel, but we are to remember that the singing accompanies the preaching of the Word, and so "the most that can be said is that singing the gospel is an adjunct to the preaching of it." Praise is due unto the Lord. By the use of that which He has not appointed for His praise He is robbed of that which is His due, and yet He has graciously condescended to use His own truth presented in the songs for the conversion of men, even when it takes the place of praise due to Him. When Israel was famishing for water God spake to Moses, saying, "Speak ye unto the rock before their eyes." But instead of speaking to the rock Moses spake to the rebels, and smote the rock. He "did not sanctify God in the eyes of the children of Israel," but still "the water came forth abundantly and the congregation drank and their cattle." The fact of the water coming forth and the people drinking to the full was no evidence that God was pleased with what Moses did. We know that He was displeased with His servant, though for the sake of the famishing people He gave drink to the thirsty.

As to the hymn-singing Churches being the largest and most numerous, I suppose that even our objectors are hardly prepared



to assert that the argument from numbers is conclusive. The Word of God, and not the sentiment of the multitude, must be our rule in faith and practice. That God does bless the efforts of hymn-singing Churches we gladly admit, and in their prosperity we rejoice. But we are not prepared to admit that their blessing results from their use of hymns instead of Psalms in the service of praise. This sort of reasoning would soon involve the objector in grave difficulties. Majorities have not always—aye, more, they have not usually—been right in matters of faith and doctrine. In the time of Ahab it was Elijah and seven thousand faithful ones against the multitudes of Israel. To-day Moham-medanism far outnumbers Christianity. Roman Catholicism is right if we are to follow the multitude. Arminians outnumber Calvinists. If relative growth determines the question of right practice, then the last few years have demonstrated through one denomination that immersion is the proper mode of baptism. Further, during the last few years few Christian communities have had such growth as Christian Science, while Mormonism and Spiritualism can claim much divine favor. The fact is that numbers prove nothing in this matter. But we may remind our objector that his argument might once have been used more effectively against his own position, for the time was when the whole Church of Christ used nothing but an inspired Psalmody. A hymn-singer would have been a lonely individual in the Church at the close of the second century and later. And to-day Psalm-singers are not a feeble folk, nor are they lonesome among the hosts of God. A brother-minister, who made a careful investigation about five years ago, gave it as his conviction that not less than five hundred thousand Christians sing the Lord's songs to the exclusion of all human composition. If Psalm-singing Churches have fallen behind in numbers and growth, there must be other causes than the fact of their having continued true to God's appointment of the Psalms as the subject matter of their praise. Their growth has been hindered, not because they have sung Psalms, but possibly by the way they have sung them.

The United Presbyterian Church to-day is struggling for an existence in one of our great cities where seventy-five years ago the opportunity was open for it to become one of the leading denominations, and for that city to become a great center for our denominational life. The opportunity was not improved, and hundreds of people, once United Presbyterians, are now in other denominations in that city. The reason was not that we sang Psalms, but that we refused to adopt such methods of Church work as would result in men being won to Christ, that we exalted non-essentials to a place quite out of keeping with their real worth, that we opposed revivals and revival methods, that we failed to recognize that we had a mission to others as well as to those who came to our shores from Scotland and the north of Ireland, and that we failed to practice Paul's method in soul-winning, "I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some." These same hindrances obtained largely among Psalm-singing Churches everywhere, retarding their growth and interfering with their usefulness. But the situation is now changed, and the Psalm-singing Churches are making such progress that soon the "reproach of famine will be no more upon them." During seventeen years of pastoral work in village, town, and city, and no little evangelistic work in various places, I have yet to find one who declined to become a member of the United Presbyterian Church because of its exclusive use of the Psalms in worship. With our splendid versification of the Psalms set to music of a high order, our praise service compares favorably with that of other Churches in manner, and as far outranks them in matter as the songs of God outrank the effusions of uninspired men.

#### Objection 6. Prayer and Praise.

A further objection to our position is that we are allowed to compose our own prayers, and therefore may compose our own hymns of praise. It may be remarked at the outset that not one Christian in ten thousand does compose his own hymns, and not one confines himself in song to his own compositions. Of course

the meaning of this objection is that we compose our own prayers, and therefore others may compose our hymns for us—an absurd sort of a proposition, since there is no logical connection between the premises and the conclusion. The logic of the objection would make everyone who prays a poet—"we compose our own prayers, and therefore may compose our own hymns." But this objection does not recognize the fundamental difference between prayer and praise. They agree in that they both have to do with worship, but they differ in that in prayer we voice our needs to God, while in praise we ascribe to Him the glory which is His due. Our changing circumstances vary our needs and hence our prayers, but God is the same and His praise is unchanging. No matter what our condition or need may be, God is yet to be praised for what He is in Himself and for His marvelous and gracious works. Again, God has provided in His Word a book of praises for us to use in our approach to Him, but He has given us no collection of prayers and commanded us to use these in presenting our desires to Him. He has promised us His Spirit to help us pray, but He has not promised us the spirit of psalmody. In the catalogue of His spiritual gifts found in the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians, all of which have to do with the edification of the Church, there is no mention made of the gift of song. The only reasonable inference is that a manual of praise had already been provided for the Christian Church, suitable and sufficient. The disciples asked the Master to teach them to pray, but they did not seek from Him the gift of song, nor did He give them a model New Testament hymn, saying, "After this manner sing ye." From such considerations as these we conclude "that the fact that we are allowed to compose our own prayers, enlightened by the Spirit of God, does not warrant us in composing our own songs in praise to God, even if every individual were gifted with poetic talent, which is not the case."

Objection 7. Good Men Write and Sing Hymns.

Again it is said that good men and women have written unin-

spired songs of praise, and that these are used and enjoyed by most saintly people. We do not deny the fact, but we do deny the deduction. Thousands of good men were slaveholders in the South half a century ago, but no one would now think of claiming that because of this fact slavery was right. The example, faith, and practice of good men are not, and never were, an infallibly safe rule of faith and duty. "To the law and to the testimony." Multitudes of good men have held to erroneous doctrines, and have indulged in practices for which they have had no "Thus saith the Lord." There are many good men and women who will neither compose nor sing a hymn in praise to God. Their example is as valuable as the example of those who think and act differently. But we must have a surer guide than the example of good men in matters of worship. There are good men to-day in the Roman Catholic Church, but this is no argument in favor of their false worship. Despite all the mummery and Mariolatry of the Romish Church, these pious souls have found and fed upon the bread of life. So, doubtless, good men have composed, and saintly souls have sung and have been edified by, uninspired songs, but it has been because God has been pleased to use the truth contained in them, even when the songs themselves have been used in a way that He did not approve.

#### Objection 8. The Feelings of the Singer.

But someone says, "No matter what is said and no matter what seems to be proven, I cannot feel that it is wrong to sing hymns." Jesus told His disciples that there would be those who would seek to put them to death and in so doing would think that they were doing God's service. Saul was the arch-persecutor of the Christian Church, but he was doing all he did in good conscience, and, so far from feeling that he was doing wrong, he was persuaded that his zeal for the law of God and the worship of his fathers was eminently right. No man's feelings can safely be depended upon to guide him aright in matters of faith and practice. If being able to say, "Somehow I cannot feel that it is wrong to do this," makes the action right, then one whose con-

science has not been enlightened by the Word and Spirit of God may justify himself in almost any act. Thousands of Christians indulge in certain amusements, enter into certain social, financial, or political affiliations which according to the teaching of God's Word are unbecoming a child of God, and contrary to God's will, but they justify themselves by saying, "I do not feel that it is wrong for me." It must be evident to every thoughtful person that the path of life and duty must be determined by the revealed will of God, and not by the changing emotions of men. So also in matters of worship. It is not our feelings that are to control our actions, but God's appointment. Many reject the doctrines of election and foreordination for no other reason than that "somehow they cannot feel that this is right." Many deny that the heathen are perishing without the gospel, simply because the fact does not correspond with their feelings.

There are other minor objections offered to our position and practice touching the exclusive use of the Psalms as our manual of praise, but the ones noticed practically cover the field. Regarding them all, we have to say in a word what was said at the outset, viz., that God's appointment is of far more concern to us than man's opinion. In our praise service our great desire is to show ourselves approved unto God. We stand upon the impregnable rock of God's revealed will.

## SPECIMENS OF EULOGIES ON THE PSALMS

BY THE REV. T. H. HANNA, JR., STEUBENVILLE, OHIO

**C**LOVER, so I have read, was for a long while a failure in Australia. It grew, grew beautifully, but it would not seed; and of course there was no way to propagate it. A scientist finally solved the problem. After examining under his microscope a clover-head and a bee, he sent to the other side of the world where the clover-seed had come from for a new breed of bees. And when they were set loose and had increased, the clover began to multiply, until now it is one of Australia's most valuable crops. The secret of it was this—the tongues of the native bees were too short to reach down the long clover petals and touch the pollen there and carry it from clover-head to clover-head. The imported bees had longer tongues, and the fructification was secured.

It is my pleasing task to assume the function of the bee, to go browsing about among the luxuriant flowers of thought concerning the Psalms, and then to lug the pollen to your hearts and minds, that there may result the fruit of a more intelligent and enthusiastic appreciation of the Songs of Zion. Two fears haunt me at the outset: that my literary "scent" may not be adequate to the enticing task; and that the mission must stop before much more than the outer border of the limitless fields has been visited.

That there may be some definiteness and cohesiveness of purpose, I shall separate these eulogies into two groups—those which speak of the literary excellence of the Psalms, and those which testify to their moral worth. Obviously the division cannot be clean-cut, for it is the moral worth of the Psalms that puts soul into their literary charm, and this in turn adds force and appeal to their moral value.

As to literary excellence, who is more competent to speak with authority than Milton? and this is his judgment: "Not in their divine argument alone, but in the very critical art of composition the Psalms may be easily made to appear over all other kinds of lyric poesy to be incomparable." Dean Stanley, in his lectures on "The Jewish Church," has this to say: "David, beyond king, soldier, or prophet, was the sweet singer of Israel. Had Raphael painted a picture of Hebrew as of European poetry, David would have sate aloft, at the summit of the Hebrew Parnassus—the Homer of Jewish song." John Trapp, in his Commentary on the Psalms, speaks as follows, and his quaint English of the seventeenth century gives a peculiar charm to his vigorous thought: "One touch of David's heavenly harp is far above all the buskin raptures, garish phantasms, splendid vanities, pageants, and landscapes of profaner wits; far better worthy to be written in letters of gold than Pindar's Seventh Ode in the Temple at Rhodes; and far more fit to have been laid up, as a rare and precious jewel, in that Persian casket embroidered with gold and pearl than Homer's Iliad, for which it was reserved by the great Alexander." Lord Byron certainly carries credentials which give him the right to speak on this question. Listen to his estimate of the harp which "the Hebrew Minstrel swept":

"It soften'd men of iron mold,  
It gave them virtues not their own;  
No ear so dull, no soul so cold,  
That felt not, fired not to the tone;  
Till David's lyre grew mightier than his throne."

Sir Daniel K. Sandford, an English scholar and litterateur, pays this fine tribute: "In lyric flow and fire, in crushing force and majesty, that seems still to echo the awful sounds once heard beneath the thunder clouds of Sinai, the poetry of these ancient Scriptures is the most superb that ever burned within the breast of man." Melanchthon, the brains of the German Reformation, as Luther was the fighter, declared that "this book [the Psalter]

is the most beautiful in the whole world"; and I am sure he was thinking of its literary attractiveness, as well as of its spiritual meaning, for Melancthon was a man of culture. Lamartine, the French poet and diplomatist, discriminates thus: "David is the first of the poets of feeling, the king of lyrists. Read Greek or Latin lyrics after a Psalm—they turn pale." I quote also these beautiful words from him:—"The Book of the Psalms is a vase of perfume broken on the steps of the temple and shedding abroad its odors to the heart of all humanity. The little shepherd has become the master of the sacred choir of the universe. A chord of his harp is to be found in all choirs, resounding forever with the echoes of Horeb and Engedi. David is the psalmist of eternity. What power hath poetry when inspired by the Almighty God!"

Speaking of the Psalms and some of the Prophecies of Isaiah, Schlegel, who knew no superior among German scholars, said: "These works are set forth with a splendor and sublimity which, considered merely as poetry, excite our admiration and disdain all comparison with any other composition; they form a fountain of fiery and godlike inspiration of which the greatest modern poets have never been weary of drinking, which has suggested to them their noblest images and animated them for their most magnificent flights." The Rev. Alexander Wright, who has rendered a timid faith good service by his refutation of the pretentious claims of the radical critics, expresses it as his conviction that, "With him [David] the great era of lyric poetry begins. A poet born, not made, he gave himself to his ennobling art, brought it to its highest perfection, solaced his own life with its triumphs, and left to the Church, Jewish and Gentile alike, a heritage which the world can never suffer to be lost." The Rev. Dr. Gregory, General Secretary of the American Bible League, makes this strong statement in the October number, 1905, of *The Bible Student and Teacher*: "It comes near to sacrilege to talk of the lyrics of Horace and the heathen poets, or even of those of the Christian poets, in the same breath with these inspired Songs of Israel!"



And he is speaking there chiefly of their literary superiority. Do you recall the lines from "The Cotter's Saturday Night," in which Burns describes the evening devotions of the poor toiler's family; and how he says of "Dundee" and "Martyrs" and the other familiar tunes:

"Compared with these, Italian trills are tame;  
The tickl'd ears no heartfelt raptures raise;  
Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise."

And do you fancy he was thinking only of the music, and was not paying the honest tribute of a brother-poet to the beauty and virility of the thought that found expression in song? Thomas Chalmers Murray, of Johns Hopkins University, in his Lectures on the Origin and Growth of the Psalms, makes this statement: "David's authentic writings will hand him down to all future time as the world's greatest master of lyric song. He has entered closest to the heart of nature; he has caught, as none other, its ever manifold expressions; he has soared nearest heaven, and lifted mankind toward divinity." The Rev. F. C. Cook, editor of the *Bible Commentary*, which represents the best thought of the English Church, closes his article on the Messianic Psalms with these words: "The Psalter emptied of Christ would still be a collection of lyric poems of admirable beauty, breathing a pure and lofty devotion, and representing in vivid colors the events and persons of the most remarkable people in the world's history. It would retain its position among the noblest and most interesting products of human genius. But to the Christian, as such, it would have no voice, no meaning; losing its highest and most distinctive characteristic, it would forfeit its claims upon his reverence and love." In much the same strain, Bishop Horne says in the introduction to his *Commentary*: "The subjects presented in the Psalms are adorned with the figures and set off with the graces of poetry; and the poetry itself is designed yet further to be recommended by the charm of music, thus consecrated to God; that so delight may prepare the way for improvement, and pleas-

ure become the handmaid of wisdom, while every turbulent passion is calmed by the sacred melody and the evil spirit still dispossessed by the harp of the son of Jesse."

And so I submit we should be grateful, and should encourage ourselves to be more susceptible to the truth that, considered merely on the lower plane of literature, our ecclesiastical hymnology is *facile princeps*. The God of the flowers and the songsters' plumage and the rainbow and the sunset has not been careless in the Psalms of that which is "a delight to the eyes." Yet we need not be content, and are not content, with that. "Strength and beauty are in His Sanctuary," and no less so in the Psalms. Accordingly, we may take a more exalted point of view and look at their moral worth. We may see how poetry and music are to "prepare the way for improvement"; we may hear that one clear voice which these lyric poems have for the devout heart because they are the messengers of divine truth.

Edward Everett Hale once wrote a little sketch in which, for the purpose of contrasting Greek and Hebrew poetry, he imagined a meeting between Homer and David. Homer sang his description of a snowstorm, and then David sang his in the One Hundred and Forty-Seventh Psalm—"He giveth snow like wool," etc. "Always this 'He,'" said one of the young soldiers to another. "Yes," his companion replied, "and it was so in the beginning of the evening when we were above there." "There is a strange difference between the two men, though the one plays as well as the other and their subjects are the same." "Yes," said the young Philistine harper, "if the Greek should sing one of the Hebrew's songs, you would know in a moment he had borrowed it." "And so if it were the other way." "Of course," said their old captain, joining in the conversation. "Homer sings the thing made; David sings the maker. Or rather, Homer thinks of the thing made; David thinks of the maker, whatever they sing." "I was going to say that Homer would sing of the cities and David of the life in them." "It is not so much what they say as the way they look at it. The Greek

sees the outside, the beauty of the thing. He paints the picture. David sings of the life of the picture." And then Dr. Hale adds this comment: "If you will carry this observation into your reading of Old Testament poetry, you will find that it is justified; and that sooner or later the singer or the poet comes around to speak of the Power of powers, the Life of lives, or the King of kings." Now, it is just because of that peculiar quality of the Psalms, just because of the life that is within them, and the common life of the human soul, that we are able to bring you such emphatic testimony, and from such varied sources, to the moral worth of the Psalms.

What can be more beautiful than this from the Rev. Baldwin Brown, or more true, about the universal adaptation of the Psalms by virtue of their touch with life: "The Jewish Psalms have furnished the bridal hymns, the battle songs, the pilgrim marches, the penitential prayers, and the public praises of every nation in Christendom, since Christendom was born. They have rolled through the din of every great European battlefield; they have pealed through the scream of the storm in every ocean highway of the world. Drake's sailors sang them when they clave the virgin waters of the Pacific; Frobisher's when they dashed against the barriers of Arctic ice and night. They floated over the waters on that day of days when England held her freedom against Pope and Spaniard, and won the naval supremacy of the world. They crossed the ocean with the *Mayflower* Pilgrims; were sung round Cromwell's camp fires, and his Ironsides charged to their music; whilst they have filled the peaceful homes of England with the voice of supplication and the breath of praise. In palace halls, by happy hearths, in squalid rooms, in pauper wards, in prison cells, in crowded sanctuaries, in lonely wilderness—everywhere they have uttered our moan of contrition and our song of triumph, our tearful complaints, and our wrestling, conquering prayer."

Or this from Washington Gladden: "Of how many heroic characters have these old temple songs been the inspiration!

Jewish saints and patriots chanted them in the synagogue and on the battlefield; Apostles and evangelists sung them among perils of the wilderness, as they traversed the rugged paths of Syria and Galatia, and Macedonia; martyrs in Rome softly hummed them when the lions near at hand were crouching for their prey; in German forests, in Highland glens, Lutherans and Covenanters breathed their lives out through their cadences; in every land penitent souls have found in them words to tell the story of their sorrow, and victorious souls the voices of their triumph; mothers watching their babes by night have cheered the vigil by singing them; mourners walking in lonely ways have been lighted by the great hopes that shine through them; and pilgrims going down into the valley of the shadow of death have found in their firm assurances a strong staff to lean upon."

Dr. Carl Moll, Superintendent of the Evangelical Church in Prussia, finished his Commentary on the Psalms during the stirring times of the Franco-German war. And in the preface, speaking of the salutary discipline that would result from the revived consciousness of God in the visitation, he speaks thus: "And many a hand, too, will be stretched out in special eagerness for the Book of the Psalms, full as it is of those poems of which such a poet as Byron has said that they are lofty as heaven and deeper than the ocean." Johann von Müller, the greatest historian of his age, confesses: "The most delightful hour to me daily is that I spend with David. There is nothing Greek or Roman, nothing in all the Western or Northern spheres like David, whom the God of Israel chose that His Name might be set in song above all the gods of the nations." Carlyle, who with all his gruffness appreciated real worth, thus expresses himself: "David's life and history, as written for us in those Psalms of his, I consider to be the truest emblem ever given of a man's moral progress and warfare here below."

The Rev. David Caldwell, a Virginia clergyman of the Episcopalian Church, makes the Church Universal his debtor for this thought, attractive in rhetoric as it is reverent in spirit: "The

Psalms are not only a field of jewels, where he who gathers merely that which lies on the surface enriches himself; but they are also a mine of spiritual wealth, where he who has sunk his shaft the deepest has always returned reporting treasures in undiminished abundance and increasing richness still below the lowest depth to which he had carried his work." In the preface to his last volume of *The Treasury of David* Spurgeon wears his heart upon his sleeve long enough to give us this as his experience: "The Book of Psalms instructs us in the use of wings as well as words; it sets us both mounting and singing. Often have I ceased my commenting upon the text, that I might rise with the Psalm and gaze upon visions of God." F. B. Meyer says of the Psalms: "They are like some marble staircase, trodden by myriads of feet, yet unworn and clear-cut still, up which we too may pass from the blessedness of the initial verse to the ringing hallelujahs that peal out their inspired anthems in the closing sentence of this Golden Book of the inner life." Here is Dr. R. S. MacArthur's estimate: "These Psalms have been the Miserere and the Te Deum of the heart's noblest sorrow and most exultant joy. To this hour the Christian on the mountain-top of faith or in the valleys of doubt and despair can find no vehicle of his thoughts so expressive, so simple, so sublime, as these old Psalms." While Professor Bissell, of Harvard, says: "The Psalter is behind us only in time; in spirit, as in expression, it must ever be the Psalm-Book of the Church on earth."

Good Dr. Watts by his own Hymn-Book, so he tells us, tried to "make David talk like a Christian." How gratuitous his efforts were, let these unprejudiced witnesses tell. Says Adam Clarke, LL. D.: "I know nothing like the Book of Psalms. It contains all the lengths, breadths, depths, and heights of Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian dispensations." Bishop Horsley says: "There is not a page of this Book of the Psalms in which the pious reader will not find his Saviour, if he read with a view of finding Him." Delitzsch remarks: "There is nothing which comes to light in the New Testament which does not already exist in germ in the

Psalms." Augustine gave it as his conviction: "The voice of Christ and His Church is well-nigh the only voice to be heard in the Psalms." The Bishop of Derry (Dr. Alexander) beautifully says: "The Golden Key of the Psalter lies in the pierced hand." Tholuck makes this sweeping assertion: "Whatever truths or praises can be spoken or sung of the wisdom, eternity, omnipotence, holiness, justice, and mercy of God are expressed in the Psalms." While Professor Moulton, of the University of Chicago, testifies thus: "The change from Judaism to Christianity is immense, but it is a change that has had no influence on the Book of Psalms. The modern Christian turns to it as naturally as the ancient Hebrew." Surely, David talks pretty much like a Christian already.

Listen to these briefer quotations, a tiny whiff of whose perfume must satisfy us, if it does not tantalize, as we hurry by: this from Calvin, "An anatomy of all parts of the Soul"; and from Ambrose, "a kind of medicine for the salvation of men"; from Renan even, the French infidel, "the eternal poetry of religious souls"; Henry van Dyke, "the breath of the eternal is in them"; William Taylor, "the throbbing heart of Holy Scriptures"; Ruskin, "the Psalter contains in its first half the sum of personal and social wisdom"; Alexander Maclaren, perhaps the prince of Bible expositors, "the heart's echo to the speech of God"; Herder in *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, "flowers that can be carried to every time and every soil and still bloom in the freshness of youth"; "all the secret cries of the human heart have found a voice through David's lips"; "rivers of refreshment and wells of consolation to weary pilgrims of every age"; "a veritable gift of God to all who will taste and see"; "the marrow of lions"; "the Easter Bells are always ringing through the Psalter"; "the one unique and inexhaustible treasury of devotion for the individual and the church"; "this sweet-smelling bundle of Psalms"; "a great sea in which are hid costly pearls"; "a mirror of divine grace, reflecting the lovely face of our Heavenly Father";—why, the pages of devout literature are full

of the Psalms, as Orlando would carve upon all the trees of Arden forest the name of "the fair, the chaste, and unexpressive she."

And as we think of this all, does not the question of Dean Church arise in our minds, and are we not forced to the same answer that satisfied him? "Where, in those rough, cruel days, did they come from—those piercing, lightning-like gleams of strange spiritual truth, those magnificent outlooks over the Kingdom of God, those raptures at His presence and His glory, those wonderful disclosures of self-knowledge, those pure outpourings of the love of God? Surely, here is something more than the mere workings of the mind of man. In that wild time there must have been men sheltered and hidden amid the tumult round them, humble and faithful and true, to whom the Holy Ghost could open by degrees 'the wondrous things of His law,' whom He taught, and whose mouths He opened, to teach their brethren by their own experience and to do each his share in the great preparation." And we are not disposed to argue with John Bright when he confesses to William Gladstone that he is content to stake upon the Book of the Psalms as it now stands "the great question whether there is or is not a Divine Revelation."

When Sir William Wallace, the Scottish hero, was being put to death, he bade them hold before his face the Psalter which his mother had given him, so that he might look on it as long as he lived. If this superficial dipping into such a congenial and far-reaching field of thought creates within any heart an intenser love for the Songs of Zion, its purpose will have been measurably realized.

## SPECIMENS OF EULOGIES ON THE PSALMS

BY THE REV. ROBERT LAMONT HAY, NEW BRIGHTON, PA.

**W**HEN one pauses to hear what has been said about the Psalms by those who have heard in them the Voice which sings

“To one clear harp in divers tones,”

he finds himself surrounded with sweet harmonies. Voices from the distant past blend in melodious accord with those to-day which utter forth their admiration of the Hebrew Psalter. It is a chorus that one hears in which every voice is tuned to the note of praise.

When one enters the gates of the Psalm-country the jangling voices of theological discussion and religious dispute cease, for here the heart speaks, and David's harp, like a touch of nature, makes the whole world kin. Indeed, the unanimity of sentiment concerning the beauty and spiritual power of the Psalms, the general response which they have found in the hearts of many races and conditions of men, and the eulogies which they have inspired, all point to something in them which satisfies a universal need. They are the expression of religious emotion, which lays hold of the human soul, and moves it with the most powerful feelings of which man is capable. They are transparent in their simplicity, the thought in them, as a distinguished writer has said, neither rising to the abstract nor sinking to the unreal, but standing in immediate contact with living impressions and feelings. They spring from the quivering chords of the poet's own soul, uttering his hopes and fears, his love and his hate, his faith and despair, his ecstasy and his agony. With deep and sympathetic understanding they enter into fellowship with nature, recognizing



there the glow of the divine Presence, and voicing with reverence and graphic power the beauties and sublimities of the natural world. The soul which speaks in these Psalms is the soul of humanity. All the varieties of human experience are mirrored here. They are independent of race and time. "They are world-wide in their sway; they are everlasting in their sweep."

The power of the Psalms to meet the varied needs of the soul is well expressed by Dr. William Alexander, Bishop of Derry, to the students of Oxford, in his Bampton lecture: "My sons," he says, "love and study the Psalter. You will discover that it will indeed

'requite  
Studios regard with opportune delight.'

As time goes on—when you bow down in penitence; when you seek for pardon; when your head is bent in sorrow; when you lie on a bed of sickness; when your lips turn white and quiver as you kneel before your dead; as the solemn hour comes when your spirit must pass into God's presence—the Psalter will never fail you. The Psalter is not like a picture on canvas, upon whose surface only the light falls. It may rather be said to resemble a picture on glass, where the radiance of each day's sunshine is deeply interfused with the artist's work; where the design may be of remote antiquity, but the light and glow are of the living present."

Dr. Henry Van Dyke, in "The Story of the Psalms," has very beautifully described their striking adaptation to meet the needs of various classes and conditions. He says: "With the music of the Psalms the shepherds and plowmen cheered their toil in ancient Palestine; and to the same music the Gallic boatmen kept time as they rowed their barges against the swift current of the Rhone. A Psalm supplied the daily grace with which the early Christians blessed their food; and the same Psalm was repeated by the communicants as they went to the Lord's Table. St. Chrysostom, fleeing into exile; Martin Luther, going to meet all

possible devils at Worms; George Wishart, facing the plague at Dundee; Wyclif, on his sick bed, surrounded by his enemies; John Bunyan, in Bedford gaol; William Wilberforce, in a crisis when all his most strenuous efforts seemed in vain, and his noble plans were threatened with ruin—all stayed their hearts, and renewed their courage, with verses from the Psalms. The Huguenots at Dieppe marched to victory chanting the Sixty-Eighth Psalm; the same stately war-song sounded over the field of Dunbar. It was a Psalm that Alice Benden sung in the darkness of her Canterbury dungeon; and the lips of the Roman Paulla, faintly moving in death, breathed their last sigh in the words of a Psalm. The motto of England's proudest university is a verse from the Psalms; and a sentence from the same Book is written above the loneliest grave on earth, among the snows of the Arctic Circle. It is with the fifth verse of the Thirty-First Psalm that our Lord Jesus Christ commended His soul into the hands of God; and with the same word St. Stephen, St. Polycarp, St. Basil, St. Bernard, St. Louis, Huss, Columbus, Luther, and Melancthon—yea, and many more saints, of whom no man knoweth,—have bid their farewell to earth and their welcome to heaven. And so it is that these Psalms come to us with a power and a sweetness which has grown through all the centuries, a life precious and manifold. But not this alone; for they breathe also the fragrance of all that is highest and best in the mortal."

The adaptability of the Psalms to various needs—this note of universality—has been observed by almost all who have spoken in eulogy of them. The brilliant but unhappy Edward Irving calls attention to this in a passage in his collected works. "The Songs of Zion," he says, "are comprehensive as the human soul, and varied as human life; where no possible state of natural feeling shall not find itself tenderly expressed, and divinely treated with appropriate remedies; where no condition of human life shall not find its rebuke or consolation; because they treat not life after the fashion of an age or people, but life in its rudiments, the life of the soul, with the joys and sorrows to which it is amenable, from

concourse with the outward necessity of the fallen world. . . . For pure pathos and tenderness of heart; for sublime imagination; for touching pictures of natural scenery, and genial sympathy with nature's various moods; for patriotism, whether in national weal or national woe; for beautiful imagery, whether derived from the relationships of human life or the forms of the created universe; and for the illustration by their help of spiritual conditions; moreover, for those rapid transitions in which the lyrical muse delighteth—her lightsome graces at one time, her deep and full inspiration at another, her exuberance of joy, and her lowest falls of grief; and for every other form of the natural soul which is wont to be shadowed forth by this kind of composition—we challenge anything to be produced from the literature of all ages and countries worthy to be compared with what we find even in the English version of the Book of Psalms."

Sometimes it is the perennial freshness of the Psalms, and the beauty and power of them as compared with other lyrics, that most impresses the reader. Herder, in his "Essays and Letters," speaks of this, as also of the manifold harmonies expressed in them with the simplest tones. He says: "As in no lyric of Greece or Rome do we find so much teaching, consolation, and instruction together, so has there scarcely ever been anywhere so rich a variation of tone in every kind of song as here. For two thousand years have these old Psalms been again and again translated and imitated in a variety of ways, and still, so rich, so comprehensive, is their manner that they are capable of many and new applications. They are flowers which vary according to each season and each soil, and ever abide in the freshness of youth. Precisely because the book contains the simplest lyric tones for the expression of the most manifold feelings, is it a hymn-book for all times."

Other eulogists have observed that the Psalter is not only a book of praise, but a book of common prayer as well, breathing not only the spirit of devout worship, but furnishing to the worshiper the richest vocabulary for the expression, either in song or

prayer, of adoration or petition, thanksgiving or confession. Luther speaks of this: "What else is the Psalter," he inquires, "than prayer to God and praise to God, that is, a book of hymns? Therefore the most blessed Spirit of God, the Father of orphans, the teacher of infants, seeing that we know not what or how we ought to pray, as the Apostle saith, and desiring to help our infirmities, after the manner of schoolmasters, who compose for children letters and short prayers, that they may send them to their parents, so prepares for us in this book both the words and feelings with which we should address our Heavenly Father, and pray concerning those things which in the other books He had taught us we ought to do and copy, that so a man may not feel the want of anything which is of import to his eternal salvation. So great is the loving care and grace of our God toward us, Who is blessed forevermore."

The public reading and singing of the Psalms give to the worshiper a means of expressing indirectly the deeper feelings of his soul, which there would seem to be a certain indelicacy in expressing directly. This has been pointed out by Frederick W. Robertson. "There are feelings," he says, "of which we do not speak to each other; they are too sacred and too delicate. Such are most of our feelings to God. If we do speak of them they lose their fragrance, become coarse; nay, there is even a sense of indelicacy and exposure. Now, the Psalms afford precisely the right relief for this feeling: wrapped up in the forms of poetry, that which might seem exaggerated is excused by those who do not feel it; while they who do, can read them, applying them without suspicion of uttering *their own* feelings. Hence their soothing power, and hence, while other portions of Scripture may become obsolete, they remain the most precious parts of the Old Testament. For the heart of man is the same in all ages." One who reads the "Confessions" of Augustine will be much impressed with the frequency with which he finds in the Psalms the medium for the expression of religious emotion. About one hundred and thirty times in this work does he either quote or adapt

the language of the Psalms. Indeed, he calls attention to the relief which they afforded him in the expression of his feelings. "How did I weep in Thy hymns and canticles," he exclaims, "touched to the quick by the voices of Thy sweet-attuned Church!" John Jacob Moser, also, has given fine expression to this fact. "One word from the Psalms," he says, "was a sun-beam to me; like a lark I settled on the pinions of that eagle; carried by her, I scaled the rock, and beheld from that eminence the world, with *its* cares and *mine*, stretched out beneath me. I acquired to think, infer, mourn, pray, wait, hope, and speak in the spirit of David. . . . Next to the writings of the New Testament these are to me my dearest and most precious book—the golden mirror, the cyclopedia of the most blessed and fruitful knowledge and experience of my life; to thoroughly understand them will be the occupation of eternity, and our second life will form their commentary."

But if the devout soul has found utterance in them, they have also often borne to the soul the messages of God—messages of admonition, or consolation, or inspiration. Mrs. Browning speaks of

"the thoughts of God that are  
Borne inward into souls afar,  
Along the Psalmist's music deep."

And heaven alone will reveal how many, touched by the sacred melody of these holy songs, have heard in them the voice of God, and have been led into the paths of a better and truer life. Wherever the gospel of Christ shall be borne, with its message of salvation, there also will come these songs of the ages, summoning the soul to communion with God, and lifting it on their pinions into the realm of devout praise.

"Wild, holy, tameless strains!" exclaims Gilfillan. "How have ye run down through ages, in which large poems, systems, and religions have perished, firing the souls of poets, kissing the lips of children, soothing the pillows of the dying, stirring the

warrior to heroic rage, perfuming the chambers of solitary saints, and clasping into one the hearts and voices of thousands of assembled worshipers; tingeing many a literature, and finding a room in many a land; and still ye are as fresh and young and powerful as ever! yea, perhaps preparing for even mightier triumphs than when first chanted. Britain, Germany, America now sing you, but you must yet awaken the dumb millions of China and Japan."

"The Book of Psalms," as Lamartine says, "is a vase of perfume broken on the steps of the temple, and shedding abroad its odors to the heart of all humanity. The little shepherd has become the master of the sacred choir of the universe. A chord of his harp is to be found in all choirs, resounding forever in unison with the echoes of Horeb and Engedi. David is the Psalmist of eternity. What power hath poetry when inspired by the Almighty God!"

In the words of Dr. Perowne, the eloquent commentator on the Psalms, I might ask: "What shall I say more? The history of the Psalms is the history of the Church, and the history of every heart in which has burned the love of God. It is a history not fully revealed in this world, but one which is written in heaven. It is a history which, could we know it, might teach us to hush many an angry thought, to recall many a bitter, hasty, uncharitable speech. The pages of that book have often been blotted with the tears of those whom others deemed hard and cold, and whom they treated with suspicion and contempt. Those words have gone up to God, mingled with the sighs, or scarcely uttered in the heart-broken anguish, of those whom Pharisees called sinners, of those whom Christians denounced as heretics or infidels, but who loved God and truth above all things else. Surely it is holy ground! We cannot pray the Psalter without realizing in a very special manner the communion of saints, the oneness of the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant; we cannot pray the Psalms without having our hearts opened, our affections enlarged, our thoughts drawn heavenward. He who can pray them

best is nearest to God, knows most of the spirit of Christ, is ripest for heaven."

This is our heritage of praise. Prayers, indeed, many of them are, and to be uttered in the spirit of devotion, but prayers that through the centuries have been chanted by the congregations of God's people as their offering of praise. And shall not the Church of the present day enter more fully into this inheritance? Here is voiced the worship of the universal heart. Here are Humanity's songs of devotion. In them

"Let the people praise Thee, O God,  
Let all the people praise Thee."

## THE PSALMS IN HISTORY

BY THE REV. GEORGE W. ROBINSON, D. D., ALLEGHENY, PA.

FONDLY as we may treasure the inspired Psalter as "the great storehouse of sacred poetry," deeply as we may reverence it as the recorded experiences of human souls touched by the Spirit of God, yet, as a satisfactory demonstration of its inherent worth and its perfect adaptability to meet the needs of any and every age, there is no argument at all comparable to the argument from history. By its very nature, the appeal of the literary, or ethical, argument is largely academic; while the historic argument makes its appeal to the common consciousness of men, and so will ever prove the more widely persuasive. What the Psalms *are* has been, and is still, a matter of more or less earnest controversy. What they have *done*—concerning this there is practically no division of sentiment. A book that for three thousand years has held so continuous and conspicuous a place in the public worship of the Church and in the private life of God's people has easily won for itself, by the token of its own preëminence, an unchallenged place among earth's immortal things. There is in it, as Tholuck so felicitously puts it, "a germ for eternity."

By no means the least impressive consideration in connection with their history is the great antiquity of these "Songs of the Ages." When much that we now deem gray with age was young these Psalms were already old. Moses made his single contribution to the Psalter with that peerless ode in which he sings of the Lord as His people's "dwelling-place in all generations"; and then we wait five hundred years for Homer to pen his Iliad and herald the fame of Troy and the captive Helen. When Virgil followed with his pen the wanderings of the young Æneas, and



sang of his toil and struggle, the harp of David had been silent for more than a thousand years. Seven centuries had slipped away into the past after these Sacred Lyrics first began to win and rule the empire of men's hearts before Alexander set forth in quest of world-wide empire. Three hundred years before Rome began to rise from the Palatine Hill, from the summit of Mount Moriah Solomon's marble Temple lifted itself toward the blue, and through its courts and chambers there echoed and reëchoed the strains of these holy Songs. Fifteen hundred years of prophecy added to two thousand years of Christ—what a sweep of history, years running into centuries, it is! These centuries have looked down upon "the splendor that was Macedon, the glory that was Greece, the grandeur that was Rome," and each, in its time, waken, wax, and wane; but through all their protracted vigil they have beheld not even a brief hiatus when the voice of the Psalms was still.

The early history of the only Mosaic contribution to the Psalter is enveloped in the mists and fog that darken our vision of everything belonging to that far-distant era. Of the use that Israel first made of it, as it came warm from the heart of the great Lawgiver, none may tell with any positive certainty. In the absence of all historical details it seems a quite reasonable conjecture at least that this Psalm of Moses provided a medium of praise and a form of prayer for the people of Israel during both their formative and constructive periods as a nation, and that with its words, rather than with their own, they came before Him to utter the joy of deliverance at the Red Sea, the rapture of realized hope as they crossed the Jordan, the gladness of triumph as the walls of Jericho fell, and the varying moods and tenses of their after experience in Canaan.

During Israel's golden age under Solomon the story of David's Psalms begins to appear somewhat in authentic history. As the Seer-King wrought the treasures of gold, silver, and granite, which David collected, into the material structure of the Temple Beautiful, so he early made the songs, which David sang, a

part of its spiritual worship. Chanted by the Levitical choirs at the morning and evening worship, these lyrics were quickly caught up by the worshipers, and repeated, either in speech or chant, in the less formal worship of the home. Held thus in memory, and handed down from father to son, they soon became the familiar folk-song of the Jewish people. As sung at stated intervals by the night-watch of the Temple, they told off for the dwellers in Zion the passing hours of the night. The pilgrim bands, on their annual marches Zionward, rested their weariness and shortened their way by "speaking to one another in these Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs of David, singing and making melody in their hearts unto the Lord," and through them gave expression to their great joy and gratitude on first sighting the Holy City. In the celebration of all the great national feasts the singing of the Psalms was a prominent feature. These were the praise-songs of Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and all the prophets. With them Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah inaugurated and prosecuted their reforms and celebrated their victories. They lent comfort and hope to the weary exiles in Babylon; and returning, these exiles plucked their harps from the willows, where untouched they had hung for seventy years, and on the long, strange journey homeward made glad their hearts and sustained their hopes with the music of David's songs. The Psalms voiced the thanksgiving of the people when the foundation of the second Temple was laid, and again, when the cap-stone was placed, with the cry, "Grace, Grace to it!" On the resumption of the Temple worship they were restored to their former place in the liturgy. In the brave struggle of the Maccabees for national independence the Psalms gave strength and courage to the leaders and the led alike.

And what more shall I say? These Jews were "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." All this was by the divine election, and as a further token of it God gave them these uncommon Psalms. Accepting both the election and the token, they found in these Psalms their church-

songs, their home-songs, their battle-songs, their pilgrim-songs. Nay more, through these God-given songs they told themselves to their Maker, not only in the ordinary acts of home and Temple worship, but in all their great crisis-hours, when they were meeting Him, as it were, face to face. Of such intimacy with, and practice of, the Psalms, there could be but one result: the Psalter not only laid mighty hold upon the individual life, commanding affection, molding character, fostering faith, but, through the individual to the community, and through the community to the race, it wrought itself into the very fabric of Jewish history, from the days of David to the time of Christ.

As it was with the Jewish Church, not otherwise was it with the Early Christian Church; the same close identity of the Psalter with the people's life and practice was carried over from the one to the other. In this regard, Christ, the divine founder of the Christian Church, came not to destroy, but to fulfil and enlarge. He Himself made much of the Psalms. Taught Him in the home, sung by Him in Temple and synagogue, cherished by Him for their richly historic suggestiveness, and acknowledged by Him to be the Word of God, He quoted more largely from them than from any other source. Although Himself the son of David, yet from David's own words in a Psalm He drew His argument to show His own preëminence over His royal sire. As His last act of public worship, just before taking up the solemn march to Gethsemane, He joined with His disciples in singing a part of the old Hebrew Hallel. On the cross He uttered the agony of His heart's desolation in the words of a Psalm, and in the words of another committed His spirit into the hands of the Father. After His Resurrection He explained to His disciples all things that were written in the Psalms concerning Himself.

As indicating the practice of all the Apostles, we read that Paul bade the Christians at Ephesus and Colossæ to "speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." James commended the Bible Psalms to those to whom he wrote as the most fitting vehicle through which to give expression to their

spiritual joy: "Is any merry, let him sing Psalms." When the Apostles went forth, in obedience to the Great Commission, to preach Christ to the world, with their new Gospel they took the old Songs, and these old Hebrew Psalms thus became the first great missionary hymns of the Christian cause. Now, from this uniform practice and teaching of Christ and His Apostles we may infer with a large degree of confidence what was the general practice of the Apostolic Church itself with reference to the Psalms; for the practice of the Church would follow very closely that of those who founded it and by whom it was first administered. When it is considered that the Apostolic Church was composed almost exclusively of Jews become Christians, of those who still cherished their Jewish traditions and their attachment to Jewish customs and practice, who loved and revered the Psalter as the historic book of praise of their people, and who were personally devoted to it through its former use in their public and private worship; when it is still further considered that these early impressions, associations, and uses were wholly in accord with the practice and directions of both Christ and the Apostles, in the absence of all other provision for their praise-worship the inference becomes so strong as to amount to a positive certainty that the practice of the Church of the Apostles with reference to the Psalter was identical with that of the Jewish Church which immediately preceded it.

As Christianity spread itself over the world, during the early centuries of the Christian era, the Psalms were everywhere identified with the movement, and they sprang more, and still more, into popular favor and employ. So marked was this growth in the use of the Psalms that by the beginning of the fourth century, if not before, it had become well-nigh universal throughout the whole of Christendom. Wherever the Psalms came to be known at all, they were sung at all times; not only in Christian assemblies, but by the people generally; not only as acts of worship, but as men labored at their tasks, in hours of pleasant recreation, and on festal and funeral occasions alike. Describing the practice of

the Christians of their day, Tertullian, in the second century, and Jerome, in the fourth, both testify that "reading the Scriptures and singing the Psalms" were essential features of their religious worship. Referring to the Psalms in the daily life of the people, Jerome also writes, "The Psalms were continually to be heard in the fields and vineyards of Palestine. The plowman, as he held his plow, chanted the Hallelujah; and the reaper, the vine-dresser, and the shepherd sang something from the Psalms of David. Where the meadows were colored with flowers, and the singing birds made their plaints, the Psalms sounded even more sweetly." "These Psalms," he adds, "are our love-songs, these the instruments of our agriculture." Sidonius Apollinaris represents "boatmen, while they worked their heavy barges up the waters of ancient France, as singing Psalms till the banks echoed with 'Hallelujah.'" "In the Church's vigils," says Chrysostom, writing from Constantinople, "the first, the midst, the last, are David's Psalms. In the morning David's Psalms are sought for; and David is the first, the midst, and the last of the day. At funeral solemnities, the first, the midst, and the last is David. Many who know not a letter can say David's Psalms by heart. In all the private houses, where women toil—in the monasteries—in the deserts, where men converse with God, the first, the midst, and the last is David." The early Church Fathers delighted in the Psalms; all used them in their praise-worship; while all the more eminent of them, with scarcely an exception, gave their best thought and labor to the critical exposition of their truth. Now all this means, if it means anything, that the Psalms of the Bible entrenched themselves more securely in the mind and heart and practice of the primitive Christian Church than in that of the older Jewish Church which received them first-hand from their makers.

With the dawn of the fifth century begins that period known in history as the Dark Ages, with the fifteenth century marking its extremest limit. It would be grateful to our pride of race could the veil of oblivion be thrown over the record of both the Church

and the world during these ten dark and disastrous centuries. Christianity lost its pristine zeal and purity, and fell into a condition of pitiable weakness and decay. The Church became utterly corrupt, and her glory departed; the "mother of religion" became the symbol of all faithlessness to her Lord and falseness to her child. The whole world limped heavily by reason of moral and spiritual disability. The Bible was wrested from the hands of the common people, and, without heaven's guidance, they were left to wander the long night through as best they might. Pure religion was practiced, even formally, only by a comparative few. Public morality in time practically disappeared. Vital faith seemed to move to the death-hour. Truth again was on the scaffold; error was mighty on the throne.

Owing to such prevailing conditions, the story of medieval Psalmody is more closely identified with the monasteries than with either the Church or the home. During the fourth and fifth centuries these monastic institutions spread with incredible rapidity over the whole of Christendom, from Egypt and Syria on the East to Britain and Gaul in the West. To these retreats many of the more devout fled for refuge from the insidious wickedness, conflict, and oppression of the world. In these monastic communities the monks applied themselves to the Psalms with an ardor of devotion that, not infrequently, approached the verge of superstition, if not actual idolatry. The Psalter was not merely their practice; it was their passion; not only their study, but their song. In it they found both breviary and viaticum. To commit the Psalms to memory was the initial requirement of the novice, while from their sayings were compiled the rules and regulations that governed his after monastic life. Of the devotions of the monks, to quote Chrysostom again, "the first, the midst, and the last were David's Psalms." The monastic duties, holy and homely, from the making of bread to the setting out of the relics, were performed to a Psalm, spoken or sung. With the words of a Psalm they greeted friends by the way, or welcomed them to their dwellings. In the copying of manuscripts of the Psalms and the

illuminating of their text they found the most precious pastime of their cloister hours. Their churches and abbeys, we are told, were built "as shrines for the Psalter," and the very sites, for this reason, were consecrated as holy ground. Now this monastic practice of the Psalter, without doubt, was followed to the extremest limit of excess, but it is not a less indubitable fact that, breathing such a Psalm-laden atmosphere, many of the choicest spirits of Christendom, Athanasius, Jerome, Augustine, and others of that ilk, names to be held in everlasting remembrance by the Church, grew great of soul and mighty for the truth. It was men with the Psalms thus wrought into the very fiber of their being, and in the strength which this gave, who went forth and took Europe in the name of Christ and His cross. It was minds thus saturated with the Psalms which have enriched the devotional literature of the world with such treasures as "The Confessions," "The Imitation of Christ," "The Divine Comedy," and "The Vision of Piers Plowman." In the realm of song the "Stabat Mater" and the "Dies Iræ" were the creations of genius similarly influenced.

Nor is it to be thought that the use of the Psalter was wholly restricted to the monasteries during this period. Although greatly corrupted, it was still employed by an errant Church in its ritual service and in the ceremonies connected with marriage and burial, the dedication of churches, devotions for the dead, and the canonization of saints; in short, in the exercise of all its ecclesiastical functions. With the words of David's Psalms the Waldenses and Albigenses sounded their praises through the fastnesses of the Piedmontese Alps in Italy and over the fair champaigns of southern France. They fortified the faith, comforted the sorrows, and brightened the hopes of those whose religious life had escaped the prevailing decay of the times. In the quest of the Holy Sepulcher they helped to kindle enthusiasm for the Crusade and inspired its followers to all manner of heroism.

I have lingered at some length just here, for in all the history of the Psalter there is nothing more strikingly significant than its

unique record in medieval times. In an age when the true gospel was virtually unpreached, and the Bible was practically unread, and pure religion was largely unknown, even then the Psalms were not unsung, but, on the contrary, enjoyed a vogue which, in passionate devotion at least, has never been excelled, before or since. When almost all other portions of the Holy Scriptures were inoperative upon the masses, shut up as they were in the cloisters, or jealously guarded by a corrupt priesthood, the Psalms continued to cast their spell upon the minds and hearts of men. While the reign of many of the holy things of God was, at this time, temporarily interrupted, the historical continuity in the use of the Psalms suffered no slightest fracture.

Musicians tell us that what they technically call the *motif*—the characteristic passage or movement—of an elaborate musical composition is frequently woven into, and thus anticipated in, the prelude. In like manner, the important part the Psalms played in the Reformation of the sixteenth century was foreshadowed in the great influence they exerted upon the lives of the forerunners, as well as of the actual leaders, in that epoch-making movement. To John Wyclif belongs the honor of sounding the first clear, unmistakable challenge to a corrupt Church, with his charge of "Anti-Christ" and plea for separation. As he lay dying at Lutterworth, so the story runs, "the Friars crowded around him, urging him to confess the wrongs he had done to their Order. But the indomitable old man caused his servant to raise him from the pillow, and, gathering all his remaining strength, exclaimed with a loud voice, 'I shall not die, but live, and declare—the evil deeds of the Friars.'" (Psalm cxviii.)

Taking up the challenge, John Huss confronted the Council of Constance with it, and then hurried away to the stake, where he died, choked by the flames, but repeating with his last breath the Thirty-First Psalm, "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit." His friend, Jerome of Prague, traveled the same fiery way "a heavenly crown to win"; and won it with his comrade's dying words upon his lips. On the night before his death, Savonarola,



in exquisite torture, his left arm broken and his shoulder wrenched from its socket by his cruel inquisitors, found peace for sleep and a fearless strength for "the trial by fire" on the morrow in David's cheering words, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" "Come, Philip," said Luther to Melancthon, in one of the dark hours of the mighty struggle, "let us sing the Forty-Sixth Psalm," *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*; and with the iron strength of that Psalm in his blood and brain "the solitary monk shook the world," and even great Rome trembled.

In the Psalms all these "mighty contenders for the faith" found an unfailing refuge for their spirits, the constant compassionater of their sufferings, and an ever-ready champion of their cause. However men like Wyclif, Luther, Erasmus, and Calvin might differ in doctrinal tenet, however bitterly, at times, the battle of controversy might rage between them, "in the green pastures" and "beside the still waters" bitterness was forgotten, strife was hushed, and, in a common love for David, they met as brothers, hand to hand, thought to thought, heart to heart. So, too, in accounting for the progress of the Reformation and the rapid spread of the Reformed doctrines, much credit must be given to the agency of the Psalter. Previous to the fifteenth century there were no books, and he was deemed fortunate above others who chanced to possess a manuscript of any kind. The direct consequence of this was that those who had any knowledge of the Psalter whatever must have acquired this knowledge through hearing it read or sung, and upon the memory they were compelled to depend for whatever use they might make of it. But the coming of the printing press, about the middle of the fifteenth century, put the versified Psalter, expurgated of Romish error, and in their own vernacular, into the hands of the common people, and thus gave it a new and larger lease of life and influence. With the Psalter in the keeping of the people themselves, where they could read and sing it for themselves, a very striking revival in its practice became immediately apparent. A veritable tidal-wave of

Psalm-singing began to sweep over the Christian world. In France, which may be taken as representative of other continental countries, the versifications of Marot and Beza created a perfect frenzy of Psalm-singing throughout the entire realm. It became a popular rage. Never did the expulsive force of a new affection find apter illustration than in the resistless manner with which the Psalms supplanted the questionable ballads and songs of the day. This passion for David confined itself to no particular class or community; but the traders in towns and cities, the boatmen on the rivers, and the vinedressers and laborers in the fields were all alike infected with the universal contagion. It leaped the barriers of class distinction, and, defying the conventions that separate royalty from the rabble, caught the fancy of king and courtier, of queen and lady-in-waiting. Many of the Catholic clergy joined the ranks of the enthusiasts, while the Catholic masses might be seen everywhere "with a Psalm-book in their hands." In the homes of the Protestants grace at meals was offered by singing a Psalm; such singing by the entire family was a regular part of the morning and evening worship, and became "one of the chief ingredients in the happiness of social life." Thus, in France, during the Reformation era, was repeated, with accentuation, the history of the Psalms in the days of Jerome and Chrysostom.

With scarcely less enthusiasm the Psalter in verse was received and employed in the Netherlands, in Switzerland and Germany, in the Slavonic provinces and the Scandinavian kingdoms of the North.

In England the Psalter, left as a legacy to the English people by Augustine on his visit to the island in the sixth century, in its printed form gained a new hold upon the people's affections and a larger use upon their tongues. "The infectious frenzy of Psalm-singing," quoting the language of Warton, "did not confine itself to France, Germany, and the other countries of the continent.

It soon extended itself to Great Britain. The Reforma-

tion being then in its incipiency, and at a time when the minds of men were ready for a change, Psalm-singing in its history became parallel to that among the Reformers across the Channel." Under the patronage of Queen Elizabeth the Psalms were welcomed into the churches and cathedrals of the Established Church, and, spreading rapidly through the parishes, grew so powerfully in popular favor that great multitudes were attracted to the churches, merely to hear, or join in, the singing. Burney in his *History of Music* says, "In England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, like orgies the Psalms were roared aloud in almost every street, as well as in the churches throughout the kingdom."

To the history of the Psalms in Scotland, a country which has no history of which the Psalms are not a part, having been employed from the earliest times down to the present moment, a new chapter was added in Reformation times. In this new chapter we find no trace of the frenzy for Psalm-singing which so stirred the people of England and the Continent. Scottish devotion does not express itself in ebullitions of enthusiasm. But as, through good and evil report, they stood staunchly by the vital doctrines of the Reformation, so they cordially accepted the Reformation principle of praise, the Psalms of the Bible, and gave to them a loyal adherence that has known no failure from that day to this. Centuries after the enthusiasm for the Psalms had kindled, blazed, and spent itself in France, Switzerland, and Germany, the Scotch were still found faithful in their devotion to David.

When the shadow of persecution lengthened over them, and they could no longer sing them in their homes and churches, lest they thus invite the swift vengeance of the persecutor, repairing to the forest's depths, or the mountain fastness, or the dens and caverns of the earth, they sent the holy Songs back to God, whence they came, borne on the notes of "the wailing Bangor," or of "the plaintive Martyrs, worthy of the name."

Now this prevalent use of the Psalms in Reformation times, and in all the countries where the Reformed Church ultimately took

root and flourished, is in itself a very significant fact. The point, however, which I wish to emphasize is this, that by reason of its general employment by the people the Psalter became a powerful ally of the Reformation and an elect agent in the spread of its principles. These Psalms, called by Luther "Psalmi Paulini," because they were so full of Pauline doctrine, universally sung as they were by all classes, preached the great essential truths of the Bible, which were also the Reformation truths, more rapidly, more widely, and more effectively than would have been possible by a great army of Reformation apostles. They crept into the high-ways and byways of the people, stole into kingly courts and royal chambers, and thus touched with their illuminating truths those of high and low degree who would have been wholly inaccessible to preacher or evangelist. The Song made ready the highway for the doctrine. So when Calvinism swept from Geneva and began to make its way in France, in the Netherlands, in England and Scotland, and Lutheranism in like manner began to spread over Germany and the countries to the north, both traveled over this song-made highway into the hearts and consciences of men. Through familiarity with the Psalms unexpected multitudes were found already infected, or so favorably disposed that the truth gained easy entry to the citadel of their minds. "To the extent to which the sacred Psalter spread throughout Europe, to that extent the Reformation prospered."

The singing of Psalms continued to be the general practice of the Reformed Churches until well on into the eighteenth century, when the hymns began to be introduced, and, in time, practically superseded them in most of these Churches. Although many Churches holding the Westminster Standards have departed from the general use of the Psalter in their praise, the Assembly knew nothing else, and made provision for nothing else.

The heroic odes of the Psalter have furnished the thrilling battle-songs for the armies of the Lord in all the great struggles for civil and religious liberty throughout history. It must be admitted that the Psalms are not altogether smooth reading for

those who press the principle, "peace at any price." They came from God, and so reflect God's thought, "righteousness first, then peace." War is an evil, and so is the plague; but either may be commissioned by God as His agent in the interest of righteousness. The Psalms are God's songs for a Church militant as yet, in the very thick of the conflict "'twixt truth and falsehood, and the good and evil side." Consequently, here and there through them we discover the devotional and ethical giving way to the martial note, and the ear catches the call to arms, the tramp of marching armies, the noise of battle, the shout of the conqueror, and the despairing wail of the conquered. Quite fittingly, therefore, these Psalms have been treasured in the heart and written upon the banners and sounded upon the lips of God's militant host, whose age-long cry has been, "Give me liberty, or give me death."

When their national independence trembled in the balance at Emmaus, Judas Maccabeus and his band of six thousand young warriors, "singing Psalms with a loud voice," fell upon Gorgias, Governor of Idumea, and his army of forty-seven thousand hardened veterans, and scattered the enemy as the withered leaves of autumn.

During the seventeenth century the followers of the False Prophet swept across the Hellespont, and with lust of blood and fiery sword were laying waste eastern Europe. "To the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty," came Sobieski, afterward King John III. of Poland, met the fanatic host at Khotin, turned them back into the sea, lifted high the Cross above the Crescent, and thus forever put an end to the dream of Mohammedan conquest in Europe. When the victory was complete these soldiers of the Lord of Hosts gave tongue to their rejoicing in the words of the One Hundred and Fifteenth Psalm:

"Not unto us, Lord, not to us,  
But do Thou glory take  
To Thy own name, ev'n for Thy truth,  
And for Thy mercy's sake."

With a burst of enthusiasm truly indescribable, the great army took up the final words:

“O wherefore should the heathen say,  
Where is their God now gone?  
But our God in the heaven is,  
What pleased Him He hath done.”

In the religious wars of France the Psalms became the Huguenot's “Marseillaise.” They sounded as the war-cry above all the battlefields of Coligny and Henry of Navarre. Before the battle of Courtras, falling upon their knees, the Huguenots chanted the One Hundred and Eighteenth Psalm:

“This day God made; with cheerful voice  
In it we'll triumph and rejoice.  
Save now, O Lord, we plead with Thee;  
Lord, send us now prosperity.”

Pointing to the kneeling host, a certain young gallant said to the commander of the Catholic forces, “See, the cowards are afraid; they are confessing themselves.” To which a scarred veteran made answer, “Sire, when the Huguenots behave like that, they are getting ready to fight to the death.” And as if to make good the veteran's declaration, leaping from their knees, with Henry at their head, they swept on to decisive victory.

The Psalms were ever on the lips of Cromwell and his invincible Ironsides in the Puritan struggle for liberty. They sang them as they marched; and as they marched, they conquered. During the night before the battle of Dunbar rain and sleet fell incessantly upon the unprotected Puritan host. Drenched with the rain, stiffened by the cold, faint from hunger, as the darkness melted into dawn they crept through the cornfields where they had bivouacked, and when at last the rising sun burst over St. Abb's head, with the shout upon their lips, “Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered,” they leaped to the attack, and the enemy, taken by surprise, were thrown into confusion and a

precipitate flight that became a complete rout. After a pursuit and punishment lasting eight hours, a halt was made, only long enough, however, to allow the Puritans to sing the shortest of all the Psalms, the One Hundred and Seventeenth, when the pursuit was resumed with fresh vigor. And time would fail me to tell of Louis the Ninth on his pilgrimages; and of Gustavus Adolphus in The Thirty Years' War; of the Waldenses also, and the Albigenses, and the Cevenols, and the Lollards; of the Covenanters, too, and the Pilgrim Fathers in the New World, who, in the Psalms, with their "uncommon pith and gnarled vigor of sentiment," found the tonic strength with which they defied popes, bearded kings, unthroned tyrants, and, waxing valiant in war, "turned to flight the armies of the aliens," that the great world might be free.

So, too, the Psalms have ever been the martyr-songs of God's sacrificial host. "When the iron was in men's souls, and they needed it in their blood, they sang the Psalms." From the amphitheaters of Rome, from the torture chambers of the Inquisition, from the Smithfields of London, from the fires of St. Andrews, from the dungeons of the Low Countries, from the guillotines of France, these heart-songs of David, burdened with the agonies that tried men's souls to the breaking-point, have risen to Him Who, "back in the dim unknown, standeth ever within the shadow, keeping watch above His own." All along the martyr's *via doloroso* they have uttered his tearful *Miserere*, long, terrible, tragic, but breaking at last into the glad, triumphant *Te Deum Laudamus*.

The Psalms in America are a part of the national heritage, since they were so closely identified with its early history, wrought so mightily into the lives of those who made it, and have entered so largely into the religious experience and practice of the people from the first day to this. In the hour when the Pilgrim Fathers were about to sail from Leyden, not in quest of the Golden Fleece, not in search of the fabled wealth, but to find a haven of liberty and lay the foundations of a mighty nation, kneeling on the sands

of Delft Haven, after prayer by the minister commending them to the God of the winds and the waves, they all joined in singing Luther's favorite Psalm, the Forty-Sixth,

“God will our strength and refuge prove,  
In all distress a present aid;  
Though waters roar and troubled be,  
We will not fear or be dismayed,”

and then sailed away in the *Speedwell*. To the strains of a similar Psalm the *Mayflower* spread her sails for her perilous journey across the seas. Arriving at the shores of the New World on the Sabbath, a day holy to the Lord among these Puritans, they spent the day aboard the ship in the customary acts of religious worship, a part of which was the singing of the Psalms. Thus the first sacred song that ever went echoing along that “rock-bound coast,” or broke the stillness of the slumbering forests, was one of the old Hebrew Psalms with which David, twenty-five centuries before, was accustomed to waken the echoes amid the hills and valleys of Judea. On the morrow, as those men stood, ax in hand, confronting the savage growths of a new continent and the unknown dangers from still more savage men and beasts, to the singing of a Psalm there was laid the foundation-stone of the great Republic forever dedicated to “the service of civil liberty and the religion of the Protestant Church.” What men they were, those pioneers of American history! If it were asked, “What have the Psalms done?” I would answer, for one thing they have made *men*—men of heroic mold, of lofty faith, of fearless soul, who bowed the knee to none save God, and loved their liberty more than they loved their lives. Of them it might be said, as Lelievre, the Frenchman, writes of the Huguenots—for the character of Puritan and Huguenot was of the same fine moral fiber: “The effect of the Psalms on the character of the Huguenots was wonderful. They nourished the moral life of a race of men such as the world will perhaps never see again.” Yes, the world would be infinitely poorer without these Puritans—



worshippers of God, haters of unrighteousness, singers of Psalms, great nation-builders.

If the harp of David presided at the laying of the foundation-stone of the nation, not less were its notes distinctly heard when the "coping-stone of American independence" was securely placed. The Constitutional Convention, which met at Philadelphia in 1778, during its early sessions was rife with dissensions; mutual distrust and jealousy seriously retarded its work, and the obstructive tactics of those opposed to the union of the colonies became so great as to draw from Washington, its President, the declaration, "It is all too probable that no plan which we propose can be adopted." At this juncture Benjamin Franklin arose and offered his historic motion that henceforth "prayers imploring the assistance of heaven and its blessings upon our deliberations be made every morning in this assembly before proceeding to business," and concluded a most eloquent plea in its behalf by quoting these words from the One Hundred and Twenty-Seventh Psalm, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." And almost from that hour the Assembly went steadily forward with its task and ultimately produced a document forever immortal. Indeed, throughout colonial times and the early formative period of the nation the Psalms left their impress upon human thought, shaped ideals, molded public opinion, colored the literature, and even reflected themselves in the laws.

The Psalms of David, brought over by the Puritans, continued to be sung *exclusively* in the churches and chapels of America until about the middle of the eighteenth century; they were *chiefly* sung by the various Presbyterian bodies for another seventy-five years; and were quite *generally* sung by those bodies until within a very recent date. And, thank God, there are a number of Christian bodies in America, and elsewhere, our own among the number, which still sing the Bible Psalms *only, always, everywhere*, and with a fervor and devotion which increase with the years.

Such is a plain, unvarnished statement of some of the more salient facts in the history of the Psalms. Brief as it is, fragmentary as it is, it is long enough and complete enough to indicate something of their mighty influence in the realm of human thought and their subtle workings in the sphere of human action. Weighed in the impartial balances of time, measured by the most critical standards of men, compared with the noblest products of human genius, tested by human experience to the utmost reach and range of its requirements, in no single instance have the Psalms been found wanting; on the contrary, they have ever demonstrated their adaptability, their superiority, their power, their beauty, their charm, their immortality. As such they have given hostages to the future as being utterly fit for private devotion and public praise, at all times, on all occasions, under all circumstances, in every age, by all men, world without end, AMEN.

## THE PSALMS IN HISTORY

BY PRESIDENT T. H. McMICHAEL, D. D., MONMOUTH, ILL.

**T**O the Hebrew captives on the banks of the rivers of Babylon it seemed a thing impossible that the Songs of Zion should be sung in a strange land. Their notion seemed to be that David's harp could give forth its melody only among the hills and valleys of Judea. Twenty-five hundred years of history, however, have furnished abundant proof of the mistaken character of such a notion. These years have gone far to show that if that harp was silent by the rivers of Babylon, those are the only rivers whose rippling music has not mingled with its melody. North, south, east, and west these songs have gone until earth has few lands in which they have not been known, and few tongues in which they have not been sung. There are certain plants which will live in some localities and not in others. The tropical flower will not flourish within the Arctic Circle; neither will mountain flora come to its best in low-lying swamp lands. But the Psalms are not plants of this sort. As Herder has beautifully put it, "These flowers can be carried to every time and every soil, and they bloom in fresh youth."

It is our purpose to attempt in some measure to follow them out from among the Judean hills into the lands whither they have gone.

I. Let us think first of the part they have played in the struggle for civil and religious liberty. Here in this old Hebrew Psalter we find the battle-hymns which have nerved the hearts of men in some of the grandest struggles this world has known. There is iron in these songs. There is that which fires men's hearts with a mighty zeal for righteousness. Yonder among the Hebrew hills I see the Moabites and the Ammonites and the Edomites as they have made common cause against Jehoshaphat. The

battle is set in array, but the hearts of the men of Judah melt within them. But now from the great martial choir which the king has provided there sounds forth the stirring anthem, "Praise the Lord, for His mercy endureth forever." In mighty power the Lord Himself marches forth into the midst of that enemy, scattering them as the winds scatter the leaves in autumn. It is but an illustration of the part these songs of Zion have played in many a similar struggle. I think of how they strengthened the hearts of the followers of the Maccabees in that brave stand of theirs against the tyrants of Syria. At Bethhoron, at Emmaus, at Bethsur, it is the old Jewish battle-song,

"Arise, O Lord, and scattered far  
Let all Thine enemies be,"

that rings forth until the tattered heroes of Judea become a terror to the Syrian armies.

But passing now beyond the confines of Judea, I think of the Waldenses of the Alps, and of how in their age-long battle with the Papacy the Psalms were their meat and drink. Few more pathetic pictures in history than that of this broken people, driven from their valleys, seeking refuge, a scant remnant of them in the city of Geneva, and marching now through its streets singing with voices choked with exhaustion and misery, "O God, why hast Thou cast us off?" There is iron in these songs, but there are tears as well.

I think of how they were interwoven into the fabric of the lives of the Huguenots, those sturdy defenders of the faith in France. When they could no longer meet for worship they could sing, and they did sing until all France was singing with them, until on the streets and in the pleasure gardens and in the palace itself could be heard, "Lord, rebuke me not," or "From the depths do I invoke Thee." And later when the sword was drawn, the Psalms became their war-songs, and out over the battlefields of Coligny and Henry of Navarre there rings forth that mighty note of confidence:

“Better to trust the Lord Most High  
Than on the help of man rely.”

I think of how in 1683, when the Moslem power was knocking at the gates of Europe, John Sobieski, King of Poland, with his followers marched down from the heights of Kalenburg thundering forth the words of the One Hundred and Fifteenth Psalm,

“Wherefore should the heathen say,  
Where is now their God?  
But our God in the heavens is,  
What pleased Him He hath done,”

and of how under the inspiration of those stirring words the invader was flung back, and Europe was saved to Christianity.

I think, too, of how large a place these songs of the ages had in that brave struggle made by our fathers yonder among the heather-covered hills of Scotland. I see those old faith heroes at Marston Moor standing side by side with Cromwell's Ironsides, making that battle-ground to resound with the Songs of Zion. I see them at Rullion Green, nine hundred of those farmer folk attacked by Dalzell with his troopers three thousand strong. Hopelessly overmatched, they make a gallant fight until, as the dusk of evening settles about them, they are finally dispersed. And now through the gloom we hear their chant of despair:

“O God, why hast Thou cast us off?  
Is it for evermore?”

I see them at Drumclog. Claverhouse with a company of his troopers has sought to surprise a field conventicle. But those old Covenanters are not to be trapped, and they move forth with their crude weapons to meet him and defeat him, under the inspiration of the Seventy-Sixth Psalm:

“There arrows of the bow He brake,  
The shield, the sword, the war.”

Thus in that age-long struggle toward the civil and religious liberty we now enjoy, this old Psalter has been much in evidence. It has indeed been the meat and the drink of Waldensian and Huguenot and Lollard and Puritan and Covenanter. Do we admire the ruggedness, the sturdiness, of these old rock men? Must we not attribute it in great measure to the food upon which they fed? You remember how old Dr. Samuel Johnson hated a Scotchman. Thinking to show his contempt, he one time made to one of the canny race the remark, "In England we feed oats to horses, in Scotland you feed oats to men." "Yes," replied the Scot, "and England is noted for its great horses, and Scotland for its great men." He saw the connection between oats and strength, whether that strength was in man or horse. And so, between this finest of Hebrew wheat upon which they fed and the moral bone and muscle of the men of Pradel-Tor and Geneva and Leyden and Drumclog we cannot but see, we cannot but conclude, that there must be some connection.

II. In the second place let us think of the part these songs have played in the spiritual movements of the Church. You remember that during a great revival in Judah "Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praises unto the Lord with the words of David and Asaph the seer." In how many of the Church's periods of revival these same Hebrew lyrics have proved themselves potent. I think of that mightiest of revival times—those Pentecostal days when the Apostles were stirring all that Eastern world as it had never been stirred before. It is these Songs of the Ages that echo and reëcho far and near. The Saviour Himself sings them as with His disciples He crosses over the brook Kedron to the Garden on Olivet. The three thousand converted under Peter's teaching sing them as they continue "daily with one accord in the Temple." Paul and Silas sing them in the dungeon of Philippi. Inseparably connected with all the scenes of that wonderful revival time are these songs of "David and Asaph the seer."

We pass down through the centuries that constitute the Dark

Ages. David's harp is not altogether silent even here. We hear it behind monastery walls, where pious souls are seeking to find the best expression of their devotional feelings. We hear it as giving forth its martial strains it stirs the blood of the Crusaders. We hear it as it breathes forth its plaintive notes through the flames that enwrap the martyr forms of a Huss, a Jerome of Prague, a Savonarola.

But now with the coming of the Reformation of the sixteenth century that harp awakes. It gives forth its melody again as in Apostolic days. Luther, writing to Spalatin, says: "We intend after the example of the prophets and primitive Fathers to turn the Psalms into the vulgar tongue for the common people, so that the Word of God may remain among the people even in singing." One has well said of this great reformer, "He clung to his old and ragged Psalter as a tried and trusty friend." But marked as was the influence of the "old and ragged" Psalter upon the Lutheran reformation in Germany, it was even more marked in the Swiss and French reformations, where Zwingli and Calvin were the moving spirits. Here the Psalms were made almost the sole matter of praise. In the version of Marot they were sung throughout France as no other songs were ever sung. The Netherlands caught up the strain, and, as one has put it, "The infectious frenzy of Psalm-singing . . . soon extended itself to Great Britain." Scotland, too, welcomed these Hebrew melodies in that time of widespread revival. She did not welcome them with the same volatile enthusiasm as did the French. That would not have been Scottish. She welcomed them as a matter of conviction; she welcomed them as God's songs, and because she believed it was right to sing them; and thus she clung to them long after they had ceased to echo among the vineyards of France.

Nor are these Psalms without their place in the Wesleyan revival that early in the eighteenth century swept across England, arousing the Church from the slumber of formalism. Indeed, we are told, it was the chanting of the One Hundred and Thirtieth Psalm in St. Paul's Cathedral that fired the heart of John Wesley

with a zeal that could not be quenched, and throughout his life the songs of the Hebrew Psalmist were often upon his lips, as well as upon the lips of his brother Charles.

Nor were these same songs without a distinct influence upon the great missionary revival of a century later. For Protestant England the history of missions to the heathen begins with John Eliot, the son of a Hertfordshire yeoman. By means of his metrical version of David's Psalms in their own dialect he sang his way into the hearts of the red men of the New England forests. From Eliot and Brainerd William Carey traced his spiritual lineage; from them Henry Martyn caught his inspiration and David Livingstone drank in long draughts of his spiritual enthusiasm.

In that spiritual movement which brought Scotland a time of quickening some sixty years ago, we find the power of the Psalter again manifesting itself. On May 18, 1843, four hundred ministers for conscience' sake march forth from the General Assembly of the Established Church. Down to old Tanfield Hall they go, voluntarily giving up the living the State has provided them. Old Dr. Chalmers takes his place as moderator. The sky without is overcast. A heavy thunder-cloud darkens the building. He announces the Forty-Third Psalm. It thunders forth, expressing the feelings of every heart:

"O send Thy light forth and Thy truth,  
Let them be guides to me."

Suddenly the cloud in the natural heavens parts and the sunshine comes streaming in. And so that day the cloud of Scotland's spiritual darkening parted, and a mighty revival touched that historic land with a new glory. It is indeed a large place these Psalms have had in the mighty spiritual movements that for three thousand years have been lifting the world nearer to its God.

III. Again, let us think of the part these songs have played through the ages in the devotional life of the individual. Coleridge said of the Bible, "I believe it because it finds me." And so these songs first voiced among the Judean hills continue to



live because they find the human heart. They find it, too, at its depths, down underneath all racial differences and all artificial barriers and distinctions. Here men at variance in all else have found a common ground. Here heroes of the Reformation like Luther and Melancthon have stood side by side with imperial champions of the Papacy like Charles V., and Columbus, and Sir Thomas More, and St. Teresa, and Francis Xavier.

But not only have they found the human heart, but such are their range and variety that they find it in all its moods and experiences. Here the joyful heart, whether on the pilgrimage journey to Jerusalem, or among the vineyards of France, or amid the forests of a new world, has found its fittest expression of thanksgiving and praise. Here the discouraged heart has found its strength. "Come, Philip, let us sing the Forty-Sixth Psalm," Luther used to say in his moments of depression; and just so many a heart has found its courage coming back as it has poured itself forth to God in these immortal utterances. Here, too, the heart bowed down has found its comfort and its solace. How often these songs have revealed their beauty and yielded their fragrance only to the broken in heart! The banner which hangs in idle folds around the flagstaff in the sultry stillness of the summer noon is fully unfurled so that we can read the inscription upon it only when the rudeness of the storm strikes it. And so it is only the heart in the storm that sees the real meaning of many of these Psalms. Writing from out the terror of the awful Indian mutiny, Dr. Duff says: "Never before did I realize as now the literality and sweetness of the Psalmist's assurance, 'I laid me down and slept; I waked, for the Lord sustained me.'" Mrs. John G. Paton, writing from her plight of danger among the savages of the New Hebrides, says: "I used to think that many of the expressions in the Psalms were but bits of Oriental imagery, but since coming here I have felt them to be literally true." Those words of the One Hundred and Twenty-Sixth Psalm,

"When Zion's bondage God turned back  
As men that dreamed were we,"

never seemed so beautiful to wayward Flora Campbell as they did when sung by the cracked voices of old Archie Moncur and his sister that night when, penitent and broken-hearted, she was making her way back through the shadows to her father's house. The words of his mither's Psalm long hung in idle folds about the flagstaff in the memory of Weelum McClure, but in the hour of death, when the storm burst upon him, that banner unfurled and he read its inscription and knew its meaning:

"And in God's house for evermore  
My dwelling-place shall be."

And so these Hebrew melodies that have stirred to action on a thousand battlefields, and have proved the stimulating power in the greatest religious movements of the world, have proved the comfort and the solace of the individual heart in all ages and all climes.

The Fathers of the Early Church, like Origen, and Jerome, and Ambrose, and Augustine, loved them; through the Dark Ages the monk in his monastery cell as he gave himself unceasingly to their chanting was comforted by them; martyr after martyr as they went to the flames or the rack leaned upon them. They have been the home-songs of countless multitudes whose names history does not record; they have been the heart-songs of humanity. They have lived longer than any other songs; they have broken through the limitations of age and race and creed to a greater degree than any other songs. They have been sung in more languages than any other songs; they have comforted more saints amid the fires of persecution than any other songs; they have interwoven themselves into more characters than any other songs; they have formed the dying utterances of more of God's people than any other songs. As we join our voices in the singing of them to-day we are indeed joining our voices with a great multitude such as no man can number—a multitude of the most godly and the most heroic souls this world has ever known.

You remember in the "Lady of the Lake" how Roderick Dhu rallied his clan by the yew cross dipped in blood. A succession of messengers carried that cross from place to place. So soon as one would lay it down another would catch it up, until every kinsman had been rallied to the standard of his chief. Just so from age to age, from hand to hand, across the centuries, has passed this Psalter-torch of truth. From Judea's hills the messengers first went forth. We find them now at Rome. To other hands the emblem is committed, and by them carried up over the Alps and down into the Piedmont valleys. Other hands are ready now to carry it out over the plains of France, and still others across the dikes of Holland. And now we find it borne aloft by Puritan of England and now by Presbyterian among the Scottish and Irish hills. And now by Puritan, Huguenot, and Covenanter alike it is borne across the sea to this new world. Here down through three centuries it has been borne, until it has come to us. Shall we now let it fall, or shall we hand it on to others?

## THE STATUS AND OUTLOOK OF THE CAUSE OF PSALMODY

BY THE REV. S. E. MARTIN, XENIA, OHIO

**I**T is small and far distant, said one. No! it is large and near at hand, said the other. Both were gazing intently at the same object. The difference in their conclusions was explained by the fact that the first looked through the large end of a field-glass, while the second looked through the small end. There are some things which affect men's conclusions more radically than the concave or convex lenses of a field-glass. Place the subject of this paper before different persons, and there will be an expression of opinions as widely different as those uttered by the men with the field-glasses. "It is a lost cause; the Psalm-book is a back number." The voice is that of Professor Up-to-Date, the hymn-writer. He is of the opinion that Psalm-singers are interesting religious fossils that have come down from a past age. We do not wish to bring any railing accusation against this brother, but we are of the opinion that the lenses of the lorgnette through which he looks at the subject are slightly colored with the green of prejudice. Another voice is heard: "The cause is losing ground; the present situation is saddening; the outlook is gloomy; the Psalter might as well be hung upon the willow trees along with the harps of captive Israel, for it will come to pass ere long that none will care to sing the Songs of Zion." We should bear in mind, however, that the field-glass of friend Disconsolate is deeply colored with the indigo blue of pessimism, and that the small end of the glass is turned toward the field and the future. We hear another voice. The speaker's face is bright as if he had seen a vision of angels. Rose-colored magnifying glasses are held before his face. Through

them he gazes long at the present and the future. "Watchman, what of the night?" "The morning cometh; the cause is gaining ground; the future is bright with promise; we will yet see all Christendom, with everlasting joy on their heads, traveling together to the heavenly Zion and singing by the way the songs God gave His Church to sing." This is the sentiment of Hopeful, a Psalm-singing optimist.

At this point in the procedure the writer will not confess himself a follower either of Disconsolate, the pessimist, or of Hopeful, the optimist, but he will seek a statement of the present situation in which all may unite.

#### THE STATUS OF THE CAUSE OF PSALMODY

I. A survey of the present situation reveals a high appreciation of the Psalms. Professor Up-to-Date was mistaken when he said that the Psalm-book was a back number. Many pious saints may not sing it; nevertheless, they love it. Splendid eulogies have been written or spoken concerning the Psalms by the leading thinkers of the ages. There are, however, nobler tributes of appreciation than these. This appreciation may never be expressed in language, but it is written in the finger-marks and the tear-stains and the frayed edges of leaves that are to be found in the well-used Bibles of pious saints. Somehow the pages of the Bible become soiled and the leaves become loose in the Book of Psalms sooner than at most other places. No other portion of God's Word is read more frequently in the homes of the bereaved, in the chambers of the sick, in the trying experiences of sorrow, and in the happy hours of life. Ah! the heart of the pious saint is often saying, "Pastor, I am sad to-day, read me a Psalm"; "Pastor, I am glad to-day, read me a Psalm"; "Pastor, the burden of sin and care seems heavy to-day, read me a Psalm"; "Pastor, I think I will die to-day, read me a Psalm." These songs were appreciated much in those days when storms of persecution raged, and when martyrs' blood flowed "free as water streams."

That appreciation has not ceased up to this present year of grace, nor will it cease while the hearts of the redeemed love the truth of God.

2. A further survey of the present situation reveals the exclusive use of the Psalms by a part of the Christian Church in singing praise to God. If any have a fondness for statistics, we ought to be able to spend the next few minutes pleasantly together, for our subject demands some facts in figures concerning Psalm-singers. I have learned, however, that bare cold facts are sometimes embellished by leaving out some of the figures and making room for the exercise of the imagination. Here is a good example from the news column of a religious paper: "On a recent Sabbath the congregation of Mt. Jericho received an addition equal to twenty per cent. of its former membership. Who can present a better showing? The Rev. Elijah Prophet is the gifted pastor." The same facts might have been stated more modestly and more definitely in this way: "The once prosperous congregation of Mt. Jericho is now reduced to a membership of nineteen, the lowest in its history. Recently four members were received by letter, the first for many a day, and at the same time letters of dismissal were granted to five." If the example of the religious reporter from Mt. Jericho is to be imitated, I would make much of the fact that the Psalms are now sung exclusively in worship by at least eighteen denominations, but I would not give exact figures as to the size of some of these denominations. I would place emphasis on the fact that Psalm-singers are found under the Southern Cross in far-away Australia, that the Psalms are used by some amid the heathen darkness of Asia, that they are heard along the banks of the Nile in darkest Africa, that the descendants of the martyrs use them still in Europe and the British Isles, and that in America there are ten-score thousands who love to sing the Songs of Zion. If the proper efforts were made at embellishment we might give the impression to the uninformed that Psalm-singers in comparison with others are like the hosts of Midian compared to Gideon's band; whereas the truth is that,

in numbers, Psalm-singers resemble the band of Gideon before the Midianites. And it is to be hoped that the resemblance to Gideon's band may appear in other ways, as well as in fewness of numbers.

I hold in my hand a roll, and I read the names that are written here. It is a roll of honor. It contains the names, not of illustrious men and angels, but of the Churches that have kept the faith of the fathers by the use of God's praise-book in singing God's praise.

The Old Reformed Church of Oost Friesland and Bentheim, a faithful remnant in German territory.

The Holland Reformed Church of the Netherlands, one of the largest bodies of Psalm-singers in the world.

The Original Seceding Reformed Church of the Netherlands, a small body refusing to unite with other secessionists from the State Church.

The Holland Reformed Church of North America, having nearly twenty thousand members.

The Reformed Church of South Africa, made up of Psalm-singing Boers.

The Free Presbyterian Church of Victoria, a faithful few in Australia.

The Free Church of Scotland.

The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

The United Original Secession Synod of Scotland.

The Presbyterian Secession Synod of Ireland.

The last five denominations named vary in membership from a few hundred to several thousand.

The Reformed Presbyterian Synod of Ireland, Old Light.

The Reformed Presbyterian Synod of Ireland, New Light.

The Reformed Presbyterian Synod of Scotland.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, New School.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, Old School.

These five Reformed Presbyterian Churches vary in size from a few hundred to about ten thousand, the one last named being the largest.

The Associate Presbyterian Church of North America, having about a thousand members.

The Associate Reformed Church of North America, having about twelve thousand members.

As these worthy names are called we see more than two hundred thousand persons in various parts of the world rising to respond "Here." And as this response is given, we see a number of independent congregations and a considerable number of congregations in denominations where hymns are permitted rising to say, "We wish to be counted, too." From this source the number of the Psalm-singers is increased by many thousands, for a part of the Canadian Presbyterian Church and a much larger part of the Irish Presbyterian Church still use the Psalms exclusively in worship. But the roll is not yet complete. There is, lastly, The United Presbyterian Church of North America, with its one hundred and forty thousand members, from whom we hear the response, "Here by the grace of God, here in the King's service." The calling of the roll has been completed, and we find that the Psalm-singing detachment of the Lord's army approaches the half-million mark in numbers. The echoes of their battle-song are heard around the world. That song is taken from the same Book as the battle-songs of Cromwell's and Sobieski's soldiers:

"But yet a banner Thou hast given  
To them that fear Thy name;  
A banner to display abroad,  
And thus the truth proclaim."

3. A further survey of the present situation reveals the fact that the Psalms are used to some extent in the worship of God by the great majority of the Christian Churches. The Psalms have been given an important place in the books that have been prepared to assist worshippers in their devotions. They have been



placed in the breviary of the Roman Catholic Church to be sung or chanted in public worship and to be read in private devotions. Both in prose and poetry they are found in the Book of Common Prayer of the Protestant Episcopal Church, so that they may be read and sung in worship. In every form of liturgy offered to the Churches using liturgies, and in every book of responsive readings prepared for the sanctuary, the Psalms have been given an important place. This has been done for the reason that there is nothing in the Bible or out of it more appropriate for such a service. If no other place is given to the Psalms, choirs will often attempt to fill the void by singing anthems taken from the Psalter. The Christian world does not believe the statement sometimes heard that the Psalms are not suited to the worship of the sanctuary in the New Testament dispensation, for to a greater or less extent they are used by all Christendom.

However, diversity of opinion and practice may be found among Christians as to the place that should be given to the Psalms in worship. This diversity may best be set forth by stating three positions held at the present time concerning the use of the Psalter in singing God's praise.

(1) The first position is that of the aforementioned eighteen Churches, viz., "It is the will of God that the Psalms should be used in singing praise to the exclusion of the devotional compositions of uninspired men."

(2) The second position is that Psalms should be sung in the worship of God, but hymns composed by uninspired men may be used also. A number of Churches are found occupying this position.

(3) The third position is that the taste or the preference of the worshippers alone determines what is to be used as material for praise. Nine-tenths of the modern hymn-books are constructed on this theory, and a great majority of the Protestant Churches have come to this position.

The defense of the first of these positions, or an assault on the other two, is not within the scope of the theme assigned,

but before we leave this part of the subject permit several observations.

*Observation One.* Once all the Reformed Churches were singing Psalms, and nearly all were singing them exclusively in the praise of God. The departure from the use of Psalms came about gradually. No Church ever yet went directly from the first position to the third. A stop has always been made at position number two, and for a time Psalms were used "and hymns also."

*Observation Two.* "And hymns also." These words are a gate. They are intended to admit into the worship of God the best devotional compositions of uninspired men to be used along with the songs of the Psalter. But when this gate is opened there follows another fulfilment of the dream of Pharaoh, and "the lean kine eat up the fat," for after a time the songs of inspiration are dropped from the praise-book one by one, until few or none are left. The gate enlarges until it becomes an open sluice-gate through which there sweeps into the Church a flood of hymnology. Congregations no longer use the hymn-book authorized by the Church to which they belong, but they secure the song-books pushed upon the market by traveling evangelists, enterprising Sabbath-school publishing houses, and money-loving book-dealers. In a single denomination the books of praise may be numbered by the dozen, and sometimes nearly a half-dozen may be found in a single congregation for use in its various services. The confusion seen in the present state of modern hymnology reminds one of the probable conditions prevailing about the base of Babel's tower when God vetoed some man-made plans for reaching heaven.

In the experience of the Church, the opening of the small gate is followed sooner or later by the adoption of the taste or preference standard. Then comes the deluge.

*Observation Three.* The "whatever-you-prefer" plan of worshiping was tried early and often in past dispensations, even though God's appointments concerning worship were explicit and not difficult to understand. The "taste standard" was tried in the days of Cain, and again in the days of Nadab and Abihu, and

once again when "proud Korah's troop was swallowed up." To some extent this standard was used in the days of Malachi, and the blind and the lame and the sick were offered in sacrifice instead of the offering commanded. If these and other similar attempts to explore the possibilities of the "taste standard" had proven safe or profitable, sacrificial victims might have been furnished for the altar from the swineherds of Israel's neighbors, or from the dogs that were without, or from any species of clean or unclean animal that was known to priest or worshiper. If the "whatever-you-prefer" plan of worshipping had been permitted to reach this stage of development, the droves of sacrificial victims on the way to the temple or to some other place, selected in accord with the "taste standard," would have possessed all the variety to be found in a zoölogical garden.

A variety such as this actually appears in the modern songs of devotion with which God's people send heavenward their offerings of praise. Ten thousand songs may be found in the authorized hymnals of the different Churches and an uncounted number in books of praise not thus authorized, and the hymn-makers and the hymn-book publishers are still busy. Some splendid specimens of devotional literature may be found in these collections, but along with these are many trashy songs that would not be given a place in any volume of poetry outside of a hymn-book. The most savage criticism of some of these songs comes from those who use them in praise, and if we are to accept their testimony these poorer songs resemble in some of their characteristics the animals offered in sacrifice in the days of Malachi. The religious doggerel of irresponsible hymn-makers, and the crudest songs of the Salvation Army, and the heresy-spreading hymns of the Mormons, and the religious jumbles that may be heard in the "Black Belt," have as good a right in God's worship as the best hymns ever written by men or given to the Church by the Spirit of God—if all depends on the preference of the worshipers. Is there not something wrong with the theory that the untaught convert from heathenism may properly become the

hymn-writer for the native Church, and that the taste of the worshipers is the only thing that is to be consulted in connection with his self-appointed task? If God had appointed a lamb for an offering, would it not have been improper to substitute a horse? If He has appointed "the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" of the Psalter for the offering of praise, would it not likewise be improper to substitute something else that the worshiper prefers?

The survey of the present situation reveals a present issue. The issue is not new, and the position of the Psalm-singing Churches is just as strong to-day as it was when the entire Christian Church was using the Psalter alone as its book of praise.

#### THE OUTLOOK OF THE CAUSE OF PSALMODY

The subject is interesting and important. Nevertheless, I stop and hesitate in turning from the present to the future. My ability to interpret prophecy or read the signs of the times is small.

The angel that wakened Zechariah out of sleep proposed a question, "What seest thou?" The angel's question comes to us as we go up to one of Zion's watch towers to see what may be seen. The curtain that veils the future hangs low. We cannot see through it or over it, and we would not if we could. But looking in other directions we may be able to learn something about the possibilities and the probabilities that lie beyond the curtain.

I. We are helped to a proper view of the outlook of the Psalmody cause by a look backward. In history we always find prophecy. The backward look presents good grounds for the belief that the Psalter will last to the end of time, and that some Christians will be singing it as long as it lasts, and also that we may expect desertions from, and accessions to, the cause of Psalmody.

(1) The Psalter will never become antiquated or obsolete. The message from the past concerning modern hymn-books is very different from this. The antiquated hymn-books once

authorized by the different hymn-singing Churches were used less than twenty years each, while evangelistic songs and Sabbath-school books furnished in such variety and abundance have invariably worn out in a few seasons. The hundred or more hymn-books in the world to-day will soon share the fate of their predecessors.

In striking contrast with these ephemeral productions we would place the Psalter, used for thirty centuries. History tells us that there is no more danger of this Book wearing out than there is of the Bible wearing out. It is the will of God that this Praise-Book shall continue in use till the end of time.

(2) There will always be a remnant using the Psalter exclusively as material for praise. At times this remnant may not be large, but it will exist, nevertheless, until the promise of His Coming is fulfilled. Some of our number may feel lonely at times when they reflect upon the present situation. On some occasions they may be able to sympathize with a discouraged prophet who found a resting-place under a certain juniper tree. They may even paraphrase the prophet's words in an attempt to describe the present situation and to express their own feelings: "There are not many of us left, and they are likely to get some of us, too." But fewness in number does not mean failure. God has not chosen to advance His cause by keeping it on the crest of the wave of popular enthusiasm. We read history, and we learn that the witnesses to the truth are sometimes a little flock, a faithful remnant, a handful of corn for the mountain, a little leaven for the meal. But never since the promise was given outside the gates of Eden has the cause of God been without witnesses ready to live for the truth and to die for the truth. The same has been true of correct principles of worship in all dispensations; some have always been found adhering to the forms of worship appointed in the Word of God. Ever since this Praise-Book has been given to the Church, some have been singing the songs of inspiration. They were few at times, and they were persecuted at times, but from churches or forests or fields or

caves or the sides of rugged mountains the voice of Psalm-singing has ever carried heavenward the praises of the faithful. Some may cease to sing the Psalms, but the Psalms will not cease to be sung.

(3) We may also learn from the past the probability of desertions from the cause of Psalmody and the possibility of large accessions. Church history contains the record of numerous desertions. Some of them are recent. Within the past few years there have been negotiations for union between one of the eighteen Psalm-singing bodies and a large hymn-singing denomination. Yes, there may be future desertions from the cause of Psalmody both on the part of members and denominations, just as there have been in the past.

On the other hand, history holds before us the hope of large increase among the adherents of the cause. The handful of corn may increase; the leaven may spread; the children of the kingdom may multiply; and the faithful remnant may become a mighty host. We often read of corruptions in worship in Old Testament history. A few faithful were always left, and when a time of revival and reformation came these faithful ones increased a hundred-fold, and corruptions in worship were swept away. Nothing in the Dark Ages exhibits the need of a reformation more clearly than the songs that were used in the Romish Church and sung in praise of saints and angels. Even in those dark hours a few faithful ones were still using the Psalter. But what a change there was when the Reformation period came! Then the Psalms were sung almost exclusively in the Reformed Churches. And may we not hope that when a new reformation, a world-wide revival, sweeps over the Church, these songs of inspiration will be sung by uncounted multitudes of the saved?

2. We are also helped to a proper view of the outlook of the Psalmody cause by a look outward. The outward look reveals an alarming extension of the use of the "taste standard," dissatisfaction with present hymnology, and abundant reason for the continued existence of the Psalmody cause.

(1) The "taste standard" has been extended by some until it includes nearly all of faith and practice. In some of the former strongholds of orthodoxy the descendants of the Reformers have not only given up the Psalms, but, sadder still, they seem to have given up faith in the inspired Word of God. It seems difficult to find a safe stopping-place when the "whatever-you-prefer" theory is once accepted, and the faith of the fathers surrendered. One of the first applications of the theory is likely to be, "Let us make our own songs." In some instances we see a second application, "Let us make our own Bible, or make over the one we have." Then it will not be hard to listen to other proposals, "Let us make our own religion, and let us make our own gods." In the conditions that make the living as well as the dying tremble for the Ark of God we read a danger signal, "Beware of adding to, or taking from, the appointments of God." We should be sure that the Early Church and the Reformation Church were wrong before we try to substitute "something up-to-date" for their faith and practice in the matter of singing praises to God.

(2) Dissatisfaction with present-day hymnology and a desire on the part of some to return to a larger use of the Psalms in worship are also to be seen in the outward look. The sentiment has been expressed by prominent hymn-singers that it would be a blessing to the Church if nine-tenths of the hymns in use were lost beyond recovery. The changing of song-books and the criticism of the songs that are in use indicate this dissatisfaction. Here is a sample from a mass of criticism. It is taken from a paper of the Baptist Church, and therefore is not prejudiced against the songs criticised. "Recent national conventions of the Christian Endeavorers and the Baptist Young People's Unions afford new evidence of the poverty of these organizations in hymns that rise above the level of religious doggerel into the realm of genuine poetry." A prominent minister of the Presbyterian Church writes thus concerning some of the material for praise in his own Church: "Our hymns do not satisfy us. There is much in them

that is weak and trifling, and we would like to have songs with more character and endurance in them. Many of the newer productions are very beautiful and stirring, but they wear out in a season or two. I have felt for a long time that there is an under-current in the Presbyterian Church that may be turned at any time toward the restoration of the Psalms to their rightful place in the hymnology of our Church." The moderator of the last General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (1905), in a sermon at Winona, Ind., raised the question: "Have we gained by substituting our modern hymns for practically all the Psalms which once shared an equal space in our hymn-book?" In the same connection this language was used: "If we can but agree upon a literary, metrical, and Christian version of the Psalms that we can all use without leaving some Christian emotion unexpressed, we may also introduce into our public worship a higher form of praise than any one Church now possesses." There is something favorable to the Psalmody cause to be found in the utterance of this sentiment upon such an occasion, but we attach even more significance to the approval of the sentiment that was heard on every side at Winona, and the commendations that came afterward from the different parts of the Church. If the conservative element in sister Churches succeed in bringing the Psalter back to a place in the praise service, much will be accomplished; and if they fail, the position of the aforementioned eighteen Churches bids fair to become the rallying-ground of orthodoxy.

(3) The need for men of granite and iron did not cease when the fires of martyrdom died out and the ax of the executioner became rusty. More than enormous wealth or extensive public improvements or secular education, the present age needs men of heroic mold, that exalt God and fear not the face of any mortal; men that sell not honor nor compromise the truth; men of strong convictions, unyielding wills, lofty motives, and brave hearts. The Psalms had much to do with the building of such characters in the troublous times that tried the souls of men long ago, and we believe that they have a mission in the future no



less important. "We need to-day," says a great French writer, "a generation nourished on this marrow of lions."

3. Again, we are helped to a proper view of the outlook of the Psalmody cause by a look inward. Hope and alarm are mingled as we look along the thin far-flung line of the defenders of this cause. Ultra-conservatism may damage the cause by attaching the same importance to venerable customs as it does to divine appointment. At one time it insists on "lining out" the Psalms, when the necessity for the practice has passed. At another time it insists on the use of tokens or antiquated versions of the Psalms, when good reasons exist for a change. Customs and methods of work are approved or forbidden solely because they were used or not used by the preceding generation.

Then, too, there may be found among some of our number a spirit of iconoclastic liberalism that stands in the green meadows of an inspired Psalmody and looks longingly over ecclesiastical fences into the highway where the beauties of the "taste-standard" are exhibited in short pastures and murky streams of water.

Some with ten generations of Psalm-singing ancestry behind them are planning to climb into the highway or introduce the "taste standard" into the pasture where the Psalm-singing flock is feeding. Special choir music is sometimes chosen by those ignorant of our position, or disloyal to it, from other sources than the Psalter, and some ministers and members are found who persuade themselves that in their own places of worship only that which is appointed should be offered in praise, but in other places they may properly offer whatever is within reach.

The writer believes the great majority of Psalm-singers to be neither ultra-conservative nor ultra-liberal, and, therefore, he sees some things favorable to the cause when his eyes are turned in the direction of the Psalm-singing Churches.

(1) In favor of the cause we find the witnesses well located. All the lighthouses are not placed in the same corner of the sea; neither are all the street lights found in the same part of the

city. Missionaries are not all sent to the same corner of the globe, but, like the lights, they are distributed among needy fields. God has distributed Psalm-singers over the world in such a way that they are well located to be light-bearers and witnesses and missionaries among men.

(2) In favor of the cause we find a safe, strong position. Power does not lie in the direction of a retreat from an impregnable position. These Psalm-singing Churches now have an influence for good in the world out of all proportion to their numbers, and if they should desert their position on Psalmody there is reason to believe that the old sad story of Samson's strength and weakness would be repeated. Our position on Psalmody is the first line of defense, and a strong line of defense, for the fundamentals of our religion. If we should desert this first position under the assaults that are made upon it, we would find that the roar of battle would be heard about some other position in a short time, and it might be that the point of the next attack would be the inspiration of the Bible, or the Atonement, or the divinity of Christ.

(3) The movement toward a common version of the Psalms is favorable to the cause. It would result in confusion if each denomination made its own version of the Bible, or even its own prose version of the Psalms. In like manner confusion is sure to be the result when each denomination makes or chooses its own metrical version of the Psalter. The prose version of the Psalms considered the best has been placed in the English Bible for all denominations. A competent Inter-denominational Committee from Churches which use the Psalms wholly or in part has been laboring for years to produce the very best metrical version for the praise services of every denomination that desires to use Psalms. That work has recently been completed. If found satisfactory, or when made satisfactory, this version should have a place in every Church where Psalms are used. A second inter-denominational committee should select suitable music for this book, and then neither words nor music should be changed except

by a committee from the Churches interested. If individual denominations insist on other versions of some of the Psalms, or different music for some of their services, it would be better to add these in a separate book than to disturb the words and music of the common version which binds together the Psalm-singing world.

(4) The human factor has more to do with the success of the cause than versions or strong positions or anything else that may be seen by the inward look. Battles are said to be won or lost not by the guns of an army but by the men behind the guns. The cause of Psalmody depends for its success on the member behind the metrical version and the strong position. God could build up a cause as He built the world—without the help of any mortal, but He has not chosen to work in this way. Back of every advancing cause, and expanding nation, and growing Church, there are loyal, courageous, energetic, self-sacrificing human units. Hence, the prospects of the Psalmody cause are dependent on the personnel of its supporters. If among them there are conviction, consecration, courage, energy, perseverance, visions of conquest, and dreams of empire for the kingdom of our Lord, then neither fire nor flood, neither men nor devils, can stop the advancing cause, for it is as easy to stop the inflowing tide with a broom or turn back the onrushing light rays at day-dawn with a curtain as it is to stop the onward rush of an expanding nation, a growing Church, or an advancing cause. These Psalm-singing Churches are not to be regarded as cold storage plants for the preservation of the truth, but rather as a part of an army enlisted for conquest. It is easier to hold the truth, and to hold it in its proper relation to other truth, when there is an onward movement for world conquest than it is to hold the truth by making its defense our only motive. And going forward, with iron in their blood, the marrow of lions in their bones, the blood of martyrs in their veins, the truth of God in their hearts, the Songs of Zion on their lips, and the dew of eternal youth upon the cause they represent, I see no reason why

these Psalm-singing Churches may not do as valiant service for "Christ and the Covenant" in the future as their fathers did in the past.

4. Again we are helped to a proper view of the outlook of the Psalmody cause by a look upward. On his knees in prayer, the adherent of this cause will see a more favorable outlook when his face is turned heavenward than when he looks backward, outward, or inward.

(1) Our hope and expectation for the success of the Psalmody cause depend on God alone. In the Constitutional Convention Benjamin Franklin uttered these memorable words, "I have lived for a long time, eighty-one years, and the longer I live the more convincing proof I have of the truth that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured, sir, in the sacred writings that 'except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.' I firmly believe that without His concurring aid we shall proceed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel. I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven and its blessing on our deliberations be held in this assembly before we proceed to business."

Looking upward, the sentiment expressed by Franklin comes to our hearts. We are trying to build something no less important than a political edifice, and unless God builds with us our efforts will be vain. We are trying to keep something that we believe to be more precious than the security of an ancient city, and unless God is the keeper of His truth "the watchman waketh but in vain." "Our help is in the name of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth," and to a praying people the prospects of a good cause are as bright as God's promises. To your prayer-closets and to your knees, then, ye singers of Psalms, and keep not silence before the Lord, and give Him no rest until He make the cause which we represent a praise and a blessing in the earth! And if a world-wide work of grace should come by way of these

Psalm-singing Churches, far more will be accomplished for the cause than by debate and wrangling with Christian brethren. Then, many of the redeemed on earth, beholding among these Psalm-singing Churches loyalty to the truth, interest and prosperity in missions, consecration of wealth, activity, and power in service, will be heard saying to each other, "Come, let us also sing the Songs of Zion."

(2) Guided by Scripture in our look heavenward, we have good reason to believe that the principle for which we stand will one day be recognized by all that serve God. Some years ago a member of one of our Ohio congregations visited in Scotland. Although reared in a hymn-singing Church she had come to be in such sympathy with our position on Psalmody that she kept silence during the singing of hymns in the church of her relatives. Her silence was noted and resented by her companion. "When you Psalm-singers get to heaven," said the critic, "will you get off in some corner by yourselves and keep quiet while all heaven is ringing with the praises of the redeemed?" The reply was worthy of a theologian: "When we get to heaven we will do there what we are doing here; we will sing whatever God appoints to be sung."

Yes, in some glad day we believe that the principle of worship which is behind the exclusive use of the Psalms in praise will be recognized as correct by all the followers of the Lamb. I do not know whether the day will ever come when the redeemed on earth will use the Psalter only in singing God's praise. Neither do I know whether this book of praise will be used by saints and angels when the glory dispensation of the Church is ushered in, and the redeemed are all gathered home. But I do know that when in our home-going we come into the glory of His presence, where joy is full and pleasures are eternal, then saints redeemed by precious blood, and unfallen angels, and archangels, too, will worship God according to His appointments.

We labor and pray that as God's will is done in heaven, so it may be done on earth.

## THE STATUS AND OUTLOOK OF THE CAUSE OF PSALMODY

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**A**N outlook is an elevated point from which one may look all around the horizon, eastward and westward, backward and forward. By the varied discussions of these Conventions we have been ascending the hill and getting many delightful views of the Psalms as we ascend. Let us now look out from the summit of the undertaking. We may take a backward look along the way we have come, and then look out over the valleys of the future that stretch beyond in inviting, hopeful prospect.

Let us get a bird's-eye view of *the past*. Such a retrospect will necessarily traverse the same ground that others have passed over, will say the same things they have said. But let it be done, if possible, more rapidly, less completely, and with some eye on the end in view.

I. The value of the Psalter as a devotional book has been universally recognized by the people of God. We speak of it now not as a song-book, but as a devotional book only, whether read or sung. In all ages and countries and communions it has entered more fully into the spiritual life than even the Books of the New Testament. Augustine called the Psalms "an epitome of the whole Scriptures," and Luther called them "his little Bible" and clung to his "old and ragged" Psalter as a tried and trusty friend. Calvin says, "Not without good grounds am I wont to call this book an anatomy of all parts of the soul, since no one can experience emotions whose portrait he could not behold reflected in its mirror." That survival from the Middle Ages

that is published in manifold and attractive forms, and that heads every list of devotional literature—"The Imitation of Christ"—caught its inspiration from the Psalter. Prothero says, "From the nature of the subject, the Imitation might be expected to rely mainly on the New Testament. But in thought, feeling, and language it is largely based on the Psalter."

Let me summon a few witnesses to the devotional superiority of the Psalms—witnesses that all intelligent Christians will hear with confidence. Says Albert Barnes, "With additional light which has been under the Christian revelation, the Psalms have not been superseded. The Christian looks to the Psalms with an interest as intense as did the ancient Jew. . . . They will retain their value in all time to come, nor will there ever be in our world such advance in religious light, experience, and knowledge, that they will lose their relative place as connected with the exercise of practical piety. David is the Psalmist of eternity; a thousand eulogies have been uttered over these hymns of the heart, these soul songs of all God's children." Patrick Fairbairn, in his "Typology of Scripture," says, "The Book of Psalms, standing midway between both covenants, and serving equally to the members of each as the handmaid of a living piety, is a witness of the essential identity of their primary and fundamental ideas. There the disciples of Moses and of Christ meet as on common ground, the one taking up as their most natural and fitting expressions of faith and hope the hallowed words which the other had been wont to use in their devotion ages before, and then bequeathed as a legacy to succeeding generations of believers." What a vivid, strong witness is this of Friedrich W. Krummacher: "Who that is somewhat intimately acquainted with the Psalms is not forced as he reads them to pause and consider whether it be true that between him—the reader—and the birthdays of these songs almost three thousand years intervene? Do they not all breathe the same freshness of life as if they had been composed but yesterday? It seems to us with them as if we dwelt in our own houses and beside our own altars; and

this thought rests on no delusion. How strange to us the songs of other nations sound, while in the Psalms of Israel we everywhere meet with our own God and with the whole range of our own personal feelings and experiences. Is it not clear from this that it was He Who knows the hearts, Whose throne is in the heavens, Who Himself loosed the tongue of the sacred singer that he might sing songs for all ages and give expression to all the diverse moods of feeling which move ever and anon in the world of hallowed thought?" Dr. Cooke, the great champion of orthodoxy in the Irish Presbyterian Church, while partial to paraphrases, when rising from a bed of sickness said, "The Psalms, the Psalms which God has given, these alone have unction that will do for a sick-bed and a dying hour." Gladstone, whose ample knowledge makes his comparison noteworthy, says, "All the wonders of Greek civilization heaped together are less wonderful than is the simple Book of Psalms—the history of the human soul in relation to its Maker." In a sermon on "The Homesickness of the Soul," the Rev. G. H. Morrison says, "If the Book of Psalms has lived through chance and change and been cherished when ten thousand volumes are forgotten, it is largely because it gives a voice in noblest poetry to this unappeased hunger of mankind. We do not crave for God because He is glorious. We are just homesick—that is the meaning of it. We crave for God because He is our home." Joseph Cook, the distinguished Boston Monday Lecturer, when speaking on Inspiration said, "We come to the great Psalms, which assuredly have no equal in literature, and which are palpably rained out of a higher sky than unassisted human genius has dropped its productions from." Richard G. Moulton, the great student of the Bible as literature, says, "The change from Judaism to Christianity is immense, but it is a change that has had no influence on the Book of Psalms; the modern Christian turns to it as naturally as the ancient Hebrew. It is safe to predict that however much mankind may alter the articles of its belief, the Hebrew Psalms will not cease to furnish matter for liturgy and stimulus to private



devotion." Dr. Alexander Maclaren utters himself in this fine, poetic strain, "The Psalter may be regarded as the heart-echo to the speech of God, the manifold music of its wind-swept strings as God's breath sweeps across them." And Lamartine says with equal poetic beauty, "The Book of Psalms is a vase of perfume broken on the steps of the temple and shedding abroad its odors to the heart of humanity."

Dr. W. G. Blaikie, of Scotland, after comparing the Psalms with hymns of other religions, and having shown, as he expresses it, their "towering preëminence," concludes his discussion as follows, "The Psalms have proved real forces in human life, enlightening, guiding and comforting, strengthening and purifying character, teaching men's hands to war and their fingers to fight, inspiring the faith that removes mountains, and the hope that even in the lowest depth of adversity waits patiently for the dawn. . . . The Psalms cannot be of mere human manufacture. Reason itself demands for them a higher origin. They are like the stars,

'Forever singing as they shine:  
The Hand that made us is divine.'

Henry Ward Beecher says, "There are a great many hymns that tell us to praise God and that tell us about praising God; but how few hymns of uninspired writers contain the very thing itself and burst forth in high jubilation. How little literature there is that is suited to the purposes of praise, except David's spiritual Psalms and Hymns, which not only pour out to God everything the soul can command, but summon the angels, the heavens, the earth, the elements, mountains and hills, trees, beasts, kings, princes and judges, young men and maidens, old men and children, prophets, priests, and all people, and the everlasting spheres to praise Him."

If we might add testimonies to particular Psalms we might fill a volume concerning their devotional value. I shall quote only

a little bit of the eulogy of Mr. Beecher on the Twenty-Third Psalm: "The Twenty-Third Psalm is the nightingale of the Psalms. It is small and of a homely feather, singing shyly out of obscurity; but, oh, it has filled the air of the whole world with melodious joy, greater than the heart can conceive. Blessed be the day on which that Psalm was born." And then after telling a little of its wondrous history in the experience of believers, he says, "Nor is its work done. It will go singing to your children and my children and to their children through all the generations of time; nor will it fold its wings till the last pilgrim is safe and time ended; and then it shall fly back to the bosom of God, whence it issued, and sound on mingled with all those sounds of celestial joy which make heaven musical forever." If the histories of individual Psalms were given with even as great fulness as the story of the Psalms in general has been told, they would swell into a mighty chorus of appreciation. How can we resist the conclusion, as we listen, that a larger use should be made of the Songs of Israel by the Church of God in all her branches to the end of devotional impulse?

II. The Psalms have been used in the praise service of the Church from the very beginning of her history. Whether or not more be included in the triple designation, it is certain that the Apostle had the Psalms in mind when he bade the disciples "admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." It is altogether certain that Christ and the Apostles sang Psalms. It will not be disputed that the first Lord's Supper closed with a hymn from the Hebrew Psalter. When Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises in the prison at Philippi "it is probable that it was portions of the Psalms, so rich in such matter, which the joyous sufferers chanted forth." Neander tells us that "the Psalms were used from the earliest times for public worship in the Western Church." Dean Stanley, in his lectures on the "History of the Jewish Church," says, "In the first centuries the Psalms were sung at the love-feasts and formed the morning and evening hymns of the primitive Churches. . . . They were

sung by the plowmen of Palestine in the time of Jerome; by the boatmen of Gaul in the time of Sidonius Apollinaris. In the most barbarous Churches the Abyssinians treat the Psalter almost as an idol. . . . In the most Protestant Churches—the Presbyterians of Scotland, the Non-Conformists of England—Psalm-singing has almost passed into a familiar description of their ritual. In the Churches of Rome and of England they are daily recited in proportions such as far exceed the reverence shown to any other portion of Scripture.” Well may Bishop Walsh in his “Voices of the Psalms” say, “Enshrined for centuries in public worship, the Psalter has become the Hymnal of the Universal Church. Jew and Gentile, Greek and Latin, Churchman and Dissenter, turn to it alike as the embodiment of the highest and holiest thoughts.” In the fourth century the great Athanasius (300-343) tells us that it was the custom to sing the Psalms, which he calls “a mirror of the soul.” Somewhat later, Augustine (343-430) in his “Confessions” (ix. 4) says of them, “They are sung through the whole world, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.” Chrysostom also tells how the Psalms enlivened the life of believers in his day: “David is always in their mouths, not only in the cities and in the churches, but in the courts, in the mountains, in the deserts, in the wilderness.” The Council of Braga (350 A. D.) made the following enactment: “Except the Psalms and hymns of the Old and New Testaments, nothing of a poetical nature is to be sung in the Church” (Schaff-Herzog). The Council of Nicæa enacted in the end of the eighth century (787 A. D.) that “no one should be made a bishop until he knew the entire Psalter by heart.” Prothero, after reciting this fact, makes the general assertion, “By the Psalms were sustained the lives and deaths of the men whose spiritual daring converted Europe to Christianity.” St. Patrick has been called, not without good reason, “A good Psalm-singing Presbyterian.” Columba transcribed the Psalter and rallied the clans to fight for his right to retain the copy he made. The Crusaders sang the Psalms on the way to the Holy City. Wyclif, the

Morning Star of the Reformation, sang them in the fourteenth century, and John Huss sang them amid the flames of martyrdom in the fifteenth century. I quote from Dr. Talbot W. Chambers, an eminent and scholarly minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, who not long since passed away, as follows: "According to Eusebius the martyrs in the Thebaid employed their last breath in uttering these divine compositions, just as was done centuries later by John Huss and Jerome of Prague when burning at the stake. And still in our own day these songs continue to fill their high office as a manual of public and private devotion."

If now we leave the main current of ecclesiastical history and follow the course of the medieval dissenters, the Waldenses, we find them likewise singing Psalms amid the mountains of Piedmont, and, until recent date, singing them almost exclusively. "Singing Psalms was not only a part of their worship, but also their recreation from labor and their solace at work. The women carrying their milk from the pasturage, and the laborer in the fields, the shepherd on the mountain side, and the mechanic in his workshop, cheered themselves by singing the Psalms of David. They committed them to memory in French and sang them without the book, and were so noted for Psalm-singing that for anyone to be found singing Psalms was taken for good proof that he was a Vaudois."

In view of this very brief history showing the large place held by the Psalms in the authorized worship of the Church from the beginning and all along the way, are we not justified in prizing them for similar use in the Church of to-day? Can we not unite with Dr. Philip Schaff in his declaration: "The Psalter is the first hymn-book of the Church, and it will outlive all other hymn-books. Its treasury of pious experience and spiritual comfort will never be exhausted." And can we not agree with Dr. Washington Gladden, who, after an enthusiastic recital of the splendid story of the Psalms, closes with these appreciative, prophetic words: "Lyrics like these, into which so much of the divine truth was breathed when they were written, and which a hundred

generations of the children of men have saturated with tears and praises, with battle shouts and sobs of pain, with all the highest and deepest experiences of the human soul, will live as long as joy lives and long after sorrow ceases; will live beyond this life and be sung by pure voices in that land from which the silent dove, coming from afar, brings us now and then upon her shining wings some glimpses of a glory that eye hath never seen."

III. The Psalms were adhered to as the sole matter of praise in the Reformed or Calvinistic Churches for more than a century and a half after the Reformation. Dr. John Ker, in his little book on the "Psalms in History and Biography," says, "In the Churches of the Reformation, it may be remarked that hymns belonged more to those of the Lutheran order and Psalms to those of the Reformed or Calvinistic. . . . Among the Reformed Churches the use of hymns entered at a period comparatively late, in the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century." Other Protestant Churches used the Psalms, but not with the same emphasis. Tholuck says, "Besides filling so large a place in the worship of the Church, this Book has furnished the model and suggested the idea of Christian song. Many of Luther's most admired hymns are free translations from the Psalms." The Rev. R. B. Taggart, a man given to careful research, says that Luther wrote in 1545, when he saw the Psalter being displaced by human compositions, "Ah, they have not the sap, the strength, the heart, the fire, that I find in the Psalter."

But the Reformed Churches, as Tholuck tells us, "that is, the Presbyterians in France, Holland, Britain, and elsewhere, held themselves bound to adhere to a closer Scriptural Psalmody, and accordingly the Psalter was metrically translated for use in public worship." Dr. McCrie, in his life of Knox, says, "In every Protestant country a metrical version of the Psalms in the vernacular language appeared at a very early period. The French version begun by Clément Marot and completed by Beza contributed much to the spread of the Reformation in France."

Baird, in his life of Beza, gives a glowing account of the Huguenot Psalter. It was issued through Beza's influence under the sanction of the French government in 1561. It had an immediate and wonderful success. Sixty editions were published in four years, and it went into the homes of the people everywhere. "It was not curiosity that had to be gratified; it was a veritable famine for the Word of God that had to be satisfied. The men, women, and children even would sing the Psalms, and at any price they must have the books containing the Psalms for use at home, in the shop, especially in over 2000 congregations." To these Psalms the Huguenots were indebted very largely for their distinctive heroic character. They were fed, as Lelievre says, on "the marrow of lions." The Psalms were the "badge by which they were recognized by friend and foe alike; they were the stimulus of the brave, the battle-cry of the combatant, the last consolatory words whispered in the ears of the dying." In the Churches of the Netherlands and the Palatinate the attachment to the Psalms was equally pronounced. And if we cross over into Britain, the land of our ancestors, we find the same early and decided preference for the Psalms. "The earlier versions were soon supplanted by the version begun by Sternhold and Hopkins and finished by the English exiles at Geneva." (McCrie.) This was printed in England, and usually bound up with the English Liturgy, and in 1564 was printed separately in Edinburgh for the use of the Scottish Church. Every householder was required by enactment of Parliament to have in his house a Bible and Psalm-book in the vernacular language for the better instruction of themselves and their families in the knowledge of God; each person under penalty of ten pounds. The first Book of Discipline of the Scottish Kirk, drawn up in 1560 by John Knox and five other ministers, and subscribed by the Kirk and Lords, contains this instructive section: "Moreover, men, women, and children should be exhorted to exercise themselves in Psalms, that when the Kirk doth convene and sing they may be the more able together with common hearts and voices to praise God." This provision might

well be revived, and congregational singing in good form and volume might be secured, if the families would exercise themselves in Psalms at home.

It is not only a courteous Christian procedure that the Alliance of the Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian System continues to use the Psalms in the formal worship of its meetings, but it is in accordance with the consensus of belief, and with the heritage of our fathers in all lands. We sit down with Knox and Calvin and Beza and Zwingli in the kingdom of heaven, aye, and with Luther and Melancthon, and sing with them the Psalms they loved so well. We conclude this point with the words of Perowne, "The history of the Psalms is the history of the Church and the history of every heart in which has burned the love of God. . . . Surely it is holy ground. We cannot pray the Psalms without realizing in a very special manner the communion of saints, the oneness of the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant."

IV. If we come now to our own country we find the Pilgrim fathers and Pilgrim mothers singing the Psalms. The Puritan divines soon prepared a version of their own, which was one of the first books published in America. Prothero is hardly correct when he says, "Till the end of the eighteenth century the Psalms were exclusively sung in the churches and chapels of America." Yet it is true that they were the only vehicle of the Church's praises for over a hundred years after the landing of the Pilgrims, and that they were in most general use till the end of the eighteenth century. Puritans and Presbyterians alike used the Psalms in their worship. The Westminster Assembly directed concerning worship as follows: "It is the duty of Christians to praise God publicly by singing Psalms together in the congregation and also privately in the family," and the same Assembly provided with great labor and care a version of the Psalms for use in all the churches of the realm. This direction and the authorized version the Presbyterians brought with them to this country, and for many years they were content to continue in the ways of

the fathers. About the middle of the eighteenth century Dr. Watts' Imitation of the Psalms appeared, and the movement was started in favor of the hymns which has now almost entirely supplanted the Psalms in the praises of the larger bodies of the Presbyterian or Reformed faith. In 1765 the following action was taken by the General Synod of the Presbyterian Church in America: "After some consideration of the query concerning the use of Dr. Watts' Imitation of the Psalms, the Synod judged it best in present circumstances only to declare that they look on the inspired Psalms in Scripture to be proper matter to be sung in divine worship, according to their original design and the practice of the Churches; yet will not forbid those to use the Imitation of them whose judgment and inclination lead them to do so." First there was toleration, then authorization, then addition, then virtual exclusion of the Psalms; and now let us hope there is a beginning of reaction in favor of the Psalms.

The attitude of the Psalm-singing Churches may be justified as conservative of what our forefathers maintained. We have not introduced new things, but have stood for the old as better. We have simply kept in line with the primitive believers, the Reformers of the sixteenth century, the Westminster divines, and the first settlers of our own land. We have at least held fast to that which is good, and of course have been slow to accept anything else as worthy to stand by its side.

V. The present status of the Psalms in the worship of the Church, though not all that we might wish, is not barren of expectation. It is no inconsiderable host that is at present keeping step with their music. Six bodies of Christians in this country, with an aggregate membership of about 180,000, sing them only in praise to God. And this great host, while holding fast, is pressing on, anchored, yet aggressive, finding no hindrance in evangelism or missionary enterprise in limitation to these divine songs. Dr. John Ker says: "After being largely excluded from the French Hymn-book, the Psalms are now finding their way back, and in the edition published at the tercentenary of the



organization of the French Protestant Church there are seventy Psalms or portions of Psalms with the original melodies included in the collection of sacred songs." And with reference to his own land, while not asking for them "an exclusive place," he expresses the wish that "the Presbyterian Church should take the whole old Psalter into its hand, reverently and kindly, and, touching it here and there, give us something to sing, full of the past and yet fitted for the present—something we might hope which could be joined in, as truly catholic, by sister Churches of other names, and which might form a bond of union more free and wide than entered into the thought of the Westminster Assembly."

The Protestant Episcopal Church gives a prominence to the Psalms in its liturgy that you will scarcely find anywhere else. It provides for the reading of the whole body of the Psalms in prose once every month, and also includes in the service of song portions of all the Psalms in meter. I am not sure that the so-called Psalm-singers have any preëminence over the Episcopalians in their use of the Psalms in the public worship of God.

Are there, in this country, any signs of reaction in favor of the Psalms in the Churches that have abandoned them? For it must be admitted that in our country there has been an almost complete abandonment of the Psalter. It seems as if the choice lies between an exclusive use of the Psalms or an exclusive use of the hymns. Or may we hope for a general return to the Psalms, so as to give them some adequate place in their hymnody? Is there not a goodly number of persons in these Churches who are tired of sentimental, introspective songs, and who long for the objective, God-exalting Psalms and other songs that are modeled after them? They want the Psalms or something like them. They are ready to accept the estimate of Dr. Henry Van Dyke: "The Psalter represents the heart of man in communion with God through a thousand years of history. It is the golden treasury of lyrics, gathered from the life of the Hebrew people.

The fault, or at least the danger, of modern lyrical poetry is that it is too solitary and separate in its tone. It tends toward exclusiveness, over-refinement, morbid sentiment. Many Christian hymns suffer from this defect. But the Psalms breathe a spirit of human fellowship even when they are most intensely personal." They agree with Lowell Mason, whose name was in his day a synonym for appropriate sacred music, who said: "If there is any one thing connected with the manner of conducting the religious services of the Sabbath by the Puritan forefathers of New England which we ought to imitate or restore, it is that of singing—of singing the Psalms, of singing the Psalms by a choir consisting of the whole congregation, both young men and maidens, old men and children."

Are there any signs of such a return to the Psalms anywhere on the horizon? Is there a cloud of promise to be seen as big as a man's hand that may overspread the sky and let down showers of blessing by and by? About fifty years ago the Associate Reformed Church, through a committee of three men—Joseph Claybaugh, James Prestley, and David R. Kerr, memorable names in our history—communicated with the Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, asking coöperation in obtaining an improved version of the Psalms, adapted to the wants of the various Presbyterian bodies in our own country. We are very sure that with that Committee there would be nothing lacking in its presentation in either ability or courtesy. But the invitation was kindly yet definitely declined. We gladly note in contrast with this that nine Presbyterian Churches have been engaged for five years in earnest and continued effort to prepare a version of the Psalms, and the report to the Assemblies and Synods in 1904, signed by the Rev. Dr. Craven as Convener, says: "The Committee feel greatly encouraged by their success in overcoming difficulties and in attaining satisfactory results. They rejoice to believe that their work is attaining a degree of perfection that will make the Psalms much more acceptable to the Church than they would be in the imperfect forms which long usage has made so dear to

many." In their report to the Assemblies of 1905 they announce the completion of their work, and commend it to the Churches for examination and criticism. The preparation of this new metrical version of the Psalms is a sign of better days for them, and let us hope that it may clear the way for a union of the broken fragments of Presbyterianism in one grand harmonious body that may be wielded with increased effectiveness as one stick in the hand of the Lord.

The Hymnal so largely in use in the Presbyterian Churches contains perhaps a dozen selections from our Psalter, and they have been a welcome retreat to many a Psalm-singer in conducting services when away from home. But we note with pleasure again that a recent song-book published by the Winona Publishing House, from a modern center and source of Presbyterian influence, has incorporated sixty of the Bible Songs in the collection, and, further, that this book was used with eminent satisfaction at the Grove City (Pa.) Bible School during the summer of 1905. And may I not refer to the brave and rather startling utterance of Dr. Moffat, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church North, at Winona Lake in May, 1905, as a note of encouragement. Listen to him, for he is always worth hearing: "There is undoubtedly a widespread feeling in our churches that the United Presbyterians should come to us. We should not only ask them to come to us, but should make an earnest effort to go to them." Listen again, "I am not sure that we should not go a considerable ways toward their position in the use of the Psalms." I would not wish by these quotations to raise the expectation that Dr. Moffat is about to swing that great Presbyterian Church into the United Presbyterian lap, as he has sometimes swung it by masterly skill in directions which he approved. But he has at least committed himself to this: "I hope to see the day when all the different bodies of the Presbyterian faith will unite in giving us a revised, singable version of the Psalms." We have now, as we think, a singable version, singing itself into favor wherever it has a chance, and yet we are ready to respond to Dr. Moffat's expressed hope with all

heartiness, and say "Amen" to the proposal of a Union Version for the future, if it has not already come through the five years' labors of the Joint Committee already referred to.

The outlook for the Psalms will be a good deal what we Psalm-singers make it. I refer not to discussion, but to manifestation. Of course, discussion of the courteous, manly sort, without unfairness or rancor, is always legitimate, though the man, the circumstances, or the occasion may often make it unwise. But illustration, advertisement, artistic display, are always in place. Dr. W. W. Barr, who still lives in our affectionate remembrance, used to say in the *Evangelical Repository*: "The best argument in favor of our position is to get men to know the Psalms," and he advised the Board of Publication to advertise the Psalter in every prominent religious newspaper in the land. But the best advertisement is a good version, set to good music, and well sung. Give the Psalms fitting dress, and they will sing themselves into favor. It has been so in every period in which they have flourished. Beza's biographer says concerning the Reformed Church in France: "That the Reformed religion gained ground in no slight extent from the stress that was laid upon Psalm-singing is a fact that cannot be ignored; nor can it be denied that the Psalms owed much of their power to the suitable and attractive music to which they were set." We have already adverted to the requirement of the First Book of Discipline, that families "exercise themselves in Psalms" in preparation for the service in the congregation. The Westminster Assembly in the Directory it adopted likewise looks in the same direction when it says: "In singing of Psalms the voice is to be tunably and gravely ordered." It is a very excellent suggestion of the Joint Committee of the Churches: "It will be necessary for the Churches, jointly or otherwise, to have selected for each Psalm the best attainable music. If this will be done as competently as the importance of the matter demands, Psalm-singing will become more popular by far than at present."

We want the Psalms wedded to suitable music, music that will

wear instead of wearing out, and then let us learn in all our congregations and communities to sing them with skill and enthusiasm. We will make more melody in our hearts unto the Lord if the melody is in our voices as well. There is no devotion in strident, rasping, discordant tones. We are under obligation to God to render His praises in the most perfect form, as well as in the best spirit. No other commendation of the Psalms can equal this.

In 1904 Mr. Wanamaker attended a convention of the State Sabbath-school Association in Pittsburgh, and the Psalms were sung. He began in an attitude of decided opposition, and ended in one of approbation. He was won to the Psalms when he heard them well rendered, and ordered 2000 copies of the programme with music for use in the Bethany Sabbath-school. Other intelligent Christians will have a deeper appreciation of the Psalms because of the song service of this Convention occasion. It may even be questioned whether its influence will not be as wide and deep as that produced by the comprehensive and complete programme of addresses.

We have the best book. Let us endeavor to give it the best possible recommendation to the Christian public. It is a part of the Book of God and is for this reason better than the books of man. It was a weighty saying of Goethe: "There are many echoes in the world, but few voices." We have the voices, and not the echoes. Yea, we have the very Voice of God, and blessed will we be if we keep within the hearing of it. Dr. Robert Stuart MacArthur, the popular pastor of the Calvary Baptist Church, New York, closes a chapter on "The Matchless Poetry of the Bible" with this splendid tribute to the Psalms, with which I shall close: "It is not too much to say, even in the close of the nineteenth century, that the most popular poet in all the world is Israel's sweet singer. . . . We ought to bathe our souls in the atmosphere of these inspired songs. . . . If every other poet must be forgotten, let us baptize our souls in the poetry of the bards of the Bible. This poetry is the inspiration of heaven. This

poetry echoes the words of the Almighty. It sings the song of redemption. It chants the prophecy of heaven; and it blends, even as we sing it on earth, with the songs of saints and seraphs, of angels and archangels, whose voices are like the sound of many waters, as they sing in the immediate presence of their King the immortal and celestial song of Moses and the Lamb."



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