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CONTENTS

The Earliest Christian Praise, by C. E. Pocknee	1
Sir Hubert Parry: Hymnodist, by Erik Routley	4
Thoughts About Words, by Michael Hewlett	11
John Mason Neale as a Translator of Latin Hymnody, by Arthur L. Peck (I)	14

THE EARLIEST CHRISTIAN PRAISE

By C. E. POCKNEE

The Christian Church may be said to have started on its way singing. For the writers of the Gospels tell us that Jesus and the disciples sang praise in the Upper Room before the Lord went forth to his crucifixion and passion (Matt. 26:30, Mark 14:26). That occasion was not only a supper connected with the religion of the Old dispensation but it also marked the inauguration of the Sacrament of the New Covenant, the breaking of bread, the Holy Communion, the Eucharist and the Mass, which is the chief act of Christian worship. There is, therefore, the highest sanction for the use of music and song at the Eucharist. Most English versions render the passage 'And when they had sung an hymn they went out to the Mount of Olives'. *The Jerusalem Bible* relying on recent research has 'after they had sung Psalms they left for the Mount of Olives'.

Those who have studied this matter tell us that it was most likely that Jesus and the disciples sang the Hallel, the Halleluya Psalms, the Praise Psalms, 113-118. How were the Psalms sung on this auspicious occasion? We may assert with confidence that neither in the Upper Room, nor in the Temple and the Synagogue, nor in the subsequent assemblies of Christians in the apostolic era, were congregations troubled with the conflicting claims of old and new *Cathedral Psalters*, Speech Rhythms or even Gelineau. The Psalter like the Gospel Canticles was sung to monophony and frequently unaccompanied.

When the writer of this article was in the Holy Land recently he was one Saturday morning in the Judaeen hill-country in the village of Ain Karim, the birthplace of St John the Baptist, and where the Gospel canticles, *Benedictus* and *Magnificat* were first uttered. There on a Sabbath Day nearly two thousand years afterwards he heard the unreformed synagogue liturgy being chanted to a Hebrew text. He recognised in the chant, sung in stentorian tones and unaccompanied, an affinity with the later chants of the Byzantine and Gregorian rites. In the synagogue at Ain Karim pre-Christian music was still in use and there can be little doubt that this was the form of cantillation used in the Upper Room by Jesus and the disciples. The pedantic view that plainchant can only be sung to a Latin text is no longer valid since plainchant has been sung in Hebrew, Syriac, Greek and Latin alike. The noted musicologist Egon Wellesz in the first essay in volume 2 of the new *Oxford History of Music* has shown that early Christian chant was based on that of the cantillation of the synagogue still in use in the unreformed synagogues of the Middle East. The Jewish musicologist, Professor A. Z. Idelsohn, in his *Jewish Music in its historical development* (New York, 1948), has given some interesting parallels between the synagogue chants and those found in Gregorian plainsong. The chanting of the Psalms and the lections is the most obvious examples. If the Christian Church took over and inherited the Psalter it also inherited the cantillation of this and other sacred texts.

Dr Wellesz in his more recondite *Eastern Elements in Western Chant* has given some important examples of plainchant which could be sung either to Greek or Latin texts. In some instances a Latin text has been imposed on what was originally a Greek text. The most interesting example of this kind of thing is the most ancient forms of Good Friday devotion, known as the Reproaches and the Veneration of the Cross; and the form of these melodies points back to a very early origin and they were certainly in use in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem in the fourth century. These hymns are at present sung in Greek, Latin and English on Good Friday (EH 737).

All these compositions must be considered 'hymns' since the Greek noun *hymnos* means any form of praise and not simply compositions in four or six lines with end-rhymes. The most ancient type of hymnody was responsorial or antiphonal, that is the lines and verses were sung with variations of voices, either a solo voice was answered by a group, or two groups answered each other. There can be little doubt that Psalm 136 with its constant refrain was sung in the Temple in a responsorial manner, cantors singing the first part and the whole assembly replying 'For his mercy', etc. (II Chron., 5:13). The early Christian canticle *Te Deum* was written to be sung antiphonally following the worship of heaven, 'To thee, cherubim and seraphim continually do cry'.

The rise of four-part harmony has had a stultifying and limiting effect on western forms of Christian praise, attractive as is counterpoint, and particularly in the Protestant tradition. The late Bernard Lord Manning in *The Hymns of Wesley and Watts* wrote with some asperity of the choice of hymnody in Anglican parish churches, and incidentally credited Charles Wesley with something he never wrote. But an Anglican may perhaps be permitted to reply to Manning that his conception of 'hymns' is too limited in spite of the great excellences of Wesley and Watts and that the English Protestant-Free Church tradition is almost entirely lacking in the responsorial and antiphonal forms of hymnody. Manning commented on the use of the Eucharistic preface in the parish Church he attended but he failed to understand that this is a hymn of far higher antiquity and universal use than Wesley or Watts since it has been chanted in this fashion in East and West everywhere and always. The writer of the third century treatise regarded it as part of his 'Apostolic Tradition'.

All congregations should be introduced to responsorial and antiphonal hymnody. A composition such as EH 735 with a congregational refrain and whose words are drawn entirely from Holy Scripture needs no apology. The freeing of certain parts of our services from the dual tyranny of heavy organ accompaniment and four-part harmony is long overdue and would bring a freshness and spontaneity in our worship. Of course, we must have our great post-Reformation hymns in four parts with the organ. But not all verses need be treated in this fashion and the unison verse in the middle of a long hymn can have a remarkable effect as Bach knew in his treatment of the WACHET AUF.

The Hymn Society at its annual conferences needs to get away in its Acts of Praise from the limiting effects of four-line metrical compositions sung in four parts and to introduce some more varied forms of Christian praise, both ancient and modern.

SIR HUBERT PARRY: HYMNODIST

By ERIK ROUTLEY

Sir Hubert Parry died just over fifty years ago, in 1918, and I suppose it is somewhat doubtful whether he would have been particularly pleased to be remembered as a composer of hymn tunes. For the first thing, or the prefatory thing, to be said about Parry is that he was probably the first non-Christian, or outer-fringe Christian, to write hymn tunes. Perhaps some reader will refute that, with documents; but while no man's Christianity can be documented (as we have lately seen in the correspondence in the *Musical Times* about Elgar), Parry was generally regarded as pretty much of an agnostic, and he was certainly a supporter of the Rationalist Press Association. Although he held good Christian literature of a certain kind in high regard, as his *Songs of Farewell* (1918) show, and although he wrote a setting of the evening canticles in D while he was at Eton, I am sure he would rather not be called an orthodox Christian.

Now this, as our century has shown, is to be said of many composers of church music in the larger forms; but I fancy that our century has also shown that in order to write successful tunes for congregational singing it is still necessary to be a member of a congregation. A man who never goes to church where hymns are sung can no more write a good hymn tune than a man who knows nothing about the violin can write a violin concerto; and indeed if Brahms did take Joachim's advice about his violin works, there is plenty of evidence in, for example, some of the brave efforts in *Songs of Praise* that the composers of what were designed as hymn tunes neither knew anything about the instrument that was to perform them nor had any notion of taking the advice of those who did. The fact that there is so much 'non-church' ethos in the *Cambridge Hymnal* is sufficient reason why that book contains so very few new hymn tunes that could possibly be called congregational, and so many that are really anthems for skilled choral performance.

Yet Parry did write quite a number of hymns, and several that are very good congregational pieces indeed—falling as naturally to the congregational voice as Chopin falls under the pianists' fingers. He brought to the writing of the best of these the gifts that placed him among the pioneers of the English musical renaissance—professional craftsmanship and a popular touch. He knew as well as his Victorian predecessors what would sing well (whatever else they were unsure of, they did know that), but he added a breadth of style and a precision of technique which those predecessors usually lacked. Had he been a church musician he would have been, obviously, S. S. Wesley's true successor. As it was, he

spent most of his time as a composer of secular or marginally religious work, of which he produced a great deal, and much of which is already forgotten. Perhaps his best 'church' music is to be found in his organ works—and here he reflects on a small scale what we find in Bach—a genuine feeling for the intimacies of worship in his chorale-preludes, contrasted with a magnificent public style in his larger works. But organ music is not in itself evidence of churchmanship: it just happens that nearly all organs have been situated in churches. Had they not been, it would have been easier to 'place' Parry (and indeed Bach) in their relations to the Christian faith.

Parry's most famous hymn tunes are the first and the last that he seems to have composed: and both have doubtful claims to be called hymn tunes. The earliest is REPTON [*EH* 383]—from the cantata *Judith*, which was first performed in 1888. This tune, since its inclusion in the *Repton School Hymn Book* as a setting for 'Dear Lord and Father', has remained a best-seller. As a piece of music it is impeccable: it has the characteristic melodic sweep and drive that Parry at his best could always produce—the kind of material out of which most of 'Blest pair of Sirens' is fashioned. Whatever you think of the words and the appropriateness of their being sung to this tune, there is no doubt about the quality of the music.

The other one, if you can call it a hymn (it is in a lot of hymn books) is JERUSALEM, which was launched in 1916 at a meeting in the Albert Hall promoting Women's Suffrage, and has since then become a sort of second National Anthem. Here again you may wonder whether it makes sense to sing those words of Blake out of context, and whether this is the right way to set them, but it is hard to fault the judgment that this is one of the great *tunes* of all time. It was Sir Walford Davies who suggested that the words should be set to music, and I should judge that the moment when Parry turned up with the manuscript must have been one of the great historic moments in this field of music. If that's what was wanted—a tune that sounds best when sung by thousands of voices—then Parry delivered the goods, and nobody alive in 1916 could have done better.

It was done so well that perhaps our late and honoured chairman, G. W. Briggs, can be forgiven for hoping that a similar song could be found to inspire the nation during the Second World War, and for suggesting a collaboration between himself and Vaughan Williams to produce it. It was written, in Briggs's worthiest style, and set to music by V-W in D major: and it was one of the few non-starters that either that author or that composer ever put on paper. There couldn't be another 'Jerusalem', not even if you take the same metre and the same key and a

devoted pupil of Parry for the composer: and that is all there is to it.

Parry's third very popular hymn tune, *LAUDATE DOMINUM*, takes us back to 1894, when it appeared as part of an anthem. Its popularity, even if it has been driven almost into hackneydom by those Dissenters who agree mostly in setting it to 'Ye servants of God' and then in singing 'Ye servants of God' every other Sunday, is entirely justified. Starting out with that rising major sixth leaving the dominant—the great danger-spot for Victorians—Parry made a tune which became a first-class piece of congregational heartiness, and which, characteristically, owed its wide popularity to its being included in due course in *Hymns Ancient and Modern*.

Those are Parry's three best known hymn tunes, and none of them was designed to be a hymn tune. Only one was written for a four-part choir: all three presuppose fairly ample musical resources including an orchestra. They are not really 'domestic architecture' at all, however well they adapt themselves to more restricted demands. What happens when Parry does write a 'straight' hymn tune? The answer is that usually he is uncomfortable.

His first commissioned hymn tune seems to have been *JUBILATE* [*BHB* 67], contributed first to the *Hymnal Companion* in 1890. The musical editors of that book were Charles Vincent, D. J. Wood, and Stainer: one may guess that it was Stainer's idea that he should be asked to write it. Nothing in the tune makes you cast your eye to the top right-hand corner of the page to see who wrote it. It might have been anybody. The one 'characteristic' point is in the three-note phrase at the end of the fifth line: you will see it again in *AMBERLEY* and in *INFANTUM LAUDES*, both, like *JUBILATE*, E flat tunes. Apart from that, *JUBILATE* has nothing much to arrest the attention. (By the way: the attribution of this tune to the 1877 *Hymnal Companion* in the current *Baptist Hymn Book Companion*, p. 103, is a mistake.)

Parry appears to have been invited to contribute two new tunes to the *Westminster Abbey Hymn Book* of 1897. These are *NATURE* [*AMR* 173] and *RUSTINGTON* [*AMR* 292]. There is a touch of S. S. Wesley, in his demure mood, about *NATURE*, but that does not save it from being a remarkably unmemorable tune, and had it been by a less eminent composer one wonders whether *A & M* would have included it. Well, on second thoughts, perhaps they would anyhow: they did like this sort of music. *RUSTINGTON* is a different matter altogether—almost, to my mind, a great tune. Not quite—because of that sudden steep climb at the beginning of phrase 7. For a moment Parry seems to have been feeling that he was writing for a choir or for instruments: this is the kind of phrase that a unison congregation really finds awkward. And that

is the trouble when you bring all the equipment available to a musician like Parry to the writing of hymn tunes. Either the composer is going to sound as if he thinks it's all a very dull business (as Parry does in *NATURE*) or he will run off the appointed track and start writing for a massed choir, which is what he seems to have done here. It was a great pity: all the rest of the tune is thoroughly satisfying, and certainly if you have got a massed choir and a good congregation and plenty of organ you can get away with it still.

There would not appear to be much in common between Parry's public optimism and the wistfulness of Herbert Howells: but undoubtedly when Howells writes a congregational tune he is capable of slipping into a Parry idiom: it was our Treasurer, John Wilson, who recently pointed out to me a tendency in Howells, when writing in or near this key and idiom, to take over the phrase that Parry uses in phrase 5 of *RUSTINGTON*: and indeed seeing that Parry is not always sanguine, nor Howells always withdrawn, you may expect to find a good deal of Parry in Howells, and if you look for it you will.

Passing into the twentieth century we next come to *ANGMERING* [*AMR* 251], which appeared first in *Alternative Hymn Tunes* (1902). Having come to it, all we can do is to pass on: it is blameless, and faceless. When we get to 1903, however, and *Church Hymns*, we encounter *FRESHWATER*, his setting of Tennyson's 'Crossing the Bar', which the editors of *A & M* (1904) must have seen just in time to include it in their book. This is vintage Parry if anything ever was. Of course it's in no sense a hymn. It's a rehearsal for the 'Songs of Farewell', and is certainly not evidence for Parry's hymn-style. But it is precisely what Parry would have called, in one of his favourite words, 'characteristic'. If there is one point on which to put your finger in order to direct somebody's attention to the typical Parry touch, it is the second chord in phrase 5, where the tonality pivots round to B flat. Several other composers, including the redoubtable Geoffrey Shaw, essayed this poem in the first years of this century, but none got inside it as Parry did.

That tune reminds us of *MARYLBONE*, which appeared in the same year but in the *Methodist Hymn Book* (now to be seen at *M.A.T.* 32), written for Charles Welsey's last poem, 'In age and feebleness extreme'; this is another part-song, and indeed another 'Song of Farewell'. Here Parry sinks himself completely in the atmosphere of S. S. Wesley's 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace'—same key, to all intents and purposes the same opening phrase. He wrote this at the request of the compilers of that *Methodist Hymn Book*, which presumably means Sir Frederick Bridge. Bridge, four years senior to Parry, may be expected to have had some admiration for his younger contemporary—but none the less he felt he

could write a better setting of 'Crossing the Bar' [MHB 640]. Perhaps he did not know of Parry's, but there is no comparison between the two settings, even though Bridge's did survive in the 1933 MHB. However, Bridge did manage to dredge up one very early composition of Parry's, called CLINTON [M 145], which seems to have been first published in 1867, and therefore to have been contemporary with the D major evening canticles. If this is so it explains the complete absence of any characteristic style. Bridge further arranged a tune of Parry's from a chorus in the symphonic ode 'War and Peace' (hands up anybody who has ever heard that!); the cantata had been performed in 1903, and Bridge's version of it comes out as PILGRIM BROTHERS [M 252]. Being an arrangement, it is in the same category as REPTON and LAUDATE DOMINIUM; but the *Congregational Hymnary* tried in 1916 the idea of setting it to 'Through the night of doubt and sorrow'. Far be it from me to expound the workings of that particular committee's corporate mind, but somebody may have suggested that it was better than RUSTINGTON because its compass is narrower. It is indeed one of the very few tunes of Parry's of more than C.M. length that remains strictly within the octave: but the result of this unusual economy of compass is a hammering on the upper dominant which leaves the ear crying out for just one high E. It isn't much good as a hymn tune and nobody else has taken any notice of it.

We must now return to the 1904 edition of *A & M*, which actually contains far more Parry than any other hymn collection. He wrote ten new tunes for the book, which the editors made up to the dozen by adding ANGMERING and FRESHWATER. Of the new tunes it is certainly INTERCESSOR [AMR 123] which attracts the musician's eye. In some ways it is his most beautiful tune. Congregationally it demands a very large body to do it justice by sounding the first note of the first phrase with real confidence: and in its original key (A minor) it is too high for congregational comfort, that note being where it is. But the octave leap by which that note is reached is in itself an inspired touch. Perhaps in the end it will go down as the simplest of Parry's choral pieces rather than as the best of his congregational hymns; but it has that marvellous melodic sweep of which in 1904 Parry was still the acknowledged master.

The rest of the contests of *AM-1904* find a rather lower level. GAUDIUM CAELESTE, which came into the Second Supplement as its last hymn [779], is a very agreeable simple piece: put it down to E flat or D and, with one of Baker's best hymns, it still makes an attractive and unusual hymn for evangelical occasions. And there is INFANTUM LAUDES [AMR 437], a jolly children's tune to which we have already made a passing reference. It is the chorus that contains the 'characteristic' phrase, and that makes the tune. The

other one containing that phrase, AMBERLEY, also appears in the 1904 *A & M*—an attempt, not particularly successful, to replace Stainer's tune for 'The roseate hues'.

Which prompts the reflection that if Parry's tunes in *AM-1904* are mostly a dull lot, one must consider what terrible jobs the editors of that book gave him to do. Who wants, you may say, a new tune to 'The roseate hues'? (Even V-W's gallant gesture in setting it to the Scottish-Genevan 107th doesn't hide the embarrassingly lush romanticism of the text.) You might also ask who wants a new tune to 'Days and Moments': but they got one [AMH 429]—a touch, again, of Parry's F major 'death' mood, but hardly more than a rather pale choral piece. They asked him for a funeral hymn, 'O Lord, to whom the spirits live', and what they got, in LUX PERPETUA [AMH 304] is another evocation of S. S. Wesley—a phrase from WRESTLING JACOB [AMR 343] to start it off, and a variant of the 'AMBERLEY' phrase at the end of line 5. Curious, how frequently Parry was obliged to handle this theme! Then they asked for a 65.65 for children [AMH 571, BOURNEMOUTH], and the composer ran out of inspiration after eleven syllables. They asked, heaven forgive them, for a setting of an awful 'Litany for Use at Sea', and Parry obliged again [AMH 643, PORTUS VOLUNTATIS] with a tune containing at least one quotation from Barnby, and another from Stainer, but nothing else to notice except that by it the composer reached the odd distinction of providing tunes for the last hymn in both the 1904 and the 1916 editions. And as for LUDNAM HILL [190], did I not trust the veracity of the editors I should doubt that it could have been composed by Parry at all; I might attribute it to Stanford in a relaxed mood, or to B. Luard Selby straining for effect, but this oddity, with its highest note on the third beat of the tune and its strange subdominant cadence at the end of line 3 sounds as little like Parry as a *L.M.* tune well could.

Seven of this dozen were preserved by Sydney Nicholson in the 1916 Second Supplement (which also provided some alternative tunes for hymns of the 1889 vintage); and Nicholson also put LAUDATE DOMINIUM in that Supplement. But it looks as if, with the 'Litany for Use at Sea', Parry had said his last word in hymnography—unless, as we said, you count JERUSALEM.

The upshot of all this is a fairly secure judgment that Parry rather soon tired of writing hymns: and nothing about that is surprising. It looks as if editors will for some time to come be unable to ignore REPTON, LAUDATE DOMINIUM, RUSTINGTON and INTERCESSOR: and choirmasters might still find a place for one or two of the choral pieces. But take away the orchestral and choral resources of the Albert Hall, and Parry soon wilted.

However—there is one point worth somebody's study. That is the relation in hymn writing between Parry and the early Vaughan

Williams. On the one hand we may well ask why V-W, who in later days spoke so warmly of Parry, and who dedicated to his memory an anthem written in 1948, the centenary of Parry's birth, never laid him under contribution in the *English Hymnal*. Perhaps the effect of commissions from the *A & M* committee suggests that not much was lost by this; but the fact remains that we just might have got another INTERCESSOR. Suppose Parry had been asked for a tune to 'Immortal, invisible', might we have been spared the monotones of ST DENIO? Perhaps V-W did ask Parry, and Parry said he had done enough for *A & M*. Perhaps V-W looked at *A & M* and shook his head.

But on the other hand, V-W himself in 1905-06 was not by any means launched as a 'Restorationist' composer: what he was writing was not yet modal or austere in the post-Tallis *Fantasia* style. I suspect that the genesis of the V-W tunes in *EH* was, as a matter of historic fact, as much Parry as anyone. Of course, SINE NOMINE and DOWN AMPNEY now sound like vintage V-W: but who else but Parry was inspiring people to write tunes in straight G major with the sort of sweep and inevitability that SINE NOMINE has? And who else was inculcating in his teaching that self-denying imaginativeness which makes DOWN AMPNEY so perfect (for the glory of that tune is in its lack of rhetoric, its cut-to-the-bone economy of diction)? Parry did set a style, when at his best, of unaffected virility, which was, among other things, what V-W and company were looking for; and Parry also had that touch of vulgar warm-bloodedness which the minor contributors to *EH* music very conspicuously lacked.

Personally I am with those who feel that a man who can never enjoy Parry lacks something which a human being shouldn't lack; since we are all a bit dehumanized now by the prevailing 'anxieties of being' celebrated by Tillich, we can't expect to compete with him on his own ground. Congregational church music just now is buried under a rather deep slag-heap, and it's fair to say that in that position its main job is not to whistle in the dark but to dig itself out: and Joubert (for example) is wielding a strenuous pick. But there is a good deal to admire in that combination of confidence and self-criticism which Parry, in the five per cent (I suppose) of his enormous output which is first-rate, showed as well as anybody of his time; for Parry did create a climate in which the restorationists could work. That, as subsequent history showed, was quite something.

THOUGHTS ABOUT WORDS

By MICHAEL HEWLETT

I write from the point of view of what Sydney Carter calls a "words man"—which is to say, someone with a problem. The problem is that the words of a hymn are in the end what matters most, and yet the singing public judges its hymns almost entirely by the tune to which they are sung. So I must at the least have a very clear idea of what I am trying to do.

My starting point is the Archbishop of Canterbury's own recipe for a contemporary hymn, given in a TV programme on the subject. I quote it not for any authority it bears, but simply because it expresses so succinctly what I myself feel.

It should have (said the Archbishop)—

"A touch of poetry,
Some teaching incisiveness,
Some personal emotion,
Some evocative reference."

"It will never be as good as good poetry," he added, "but it may have an excellence of its own."

"A touch of poetry": Certainly, if poetry is (as one poet has expressed it) "heightened prose", there should be something of the same quality about the hymn, relatively to the prose of the sermon or (in some senses) the prayers. Certainly there must be something of it in the images employed. I would only say that this quality will *not* be found in copying the "poetic" language—or, for that matter, the religious attitudes—of the past. Even if it is about space travel, the resultant verse will be Victorian pastiche: another example of the all-pervasive "religionese" to which Twentieth-Century minds firmly close.

But in any case we should heed the Archbishop's warning, that "it will never be as good as good poetry", and refuse to regard ourselves as primarily poets. Poets in any century, but especially in this, speak first for themselves and only secondarily to others; and those others are likely to receive what is offered only in the course of slow digestion. By contrast we have to produce (if possible) something which other people can sing—and mean—and so grasp in the course of singing the line. Very few poets can be so simple, and yet go as deep as they feel they have a right to.

A better model, to my mind, is the good journalist, who has to face some of the same tasks: to present a theme clearly, and pithily, and memorably, in a limited space. Verse and rhyme are valuable, not because they are "poetry", but because they help people to remember. A touch of heightened imagination and phrasing has its use in journalism as well as in poetry. Nor should a hymn-writer be afraid of finding his work expendable, like jour-

nalism. I would tend, therefore, to define hymn-writing as having the same relation to poetry as journalism has to "literature" in general.

"*Some teaching incisiveness*": Until I started writing, I could not understand what the Methodists meant by saying that the teaching in their services was in the hymns. But from the writer's point of view it is an obvious truth that hymns are a teaching medium. A hymn must have a "message"—even if it be only to recreate a picture already established in the Bible, as "While shepherds watched" does. Moreover it had better have one message only, or it will merely confuse the singers. It must avoid the mistake of "The sower went forth sowing", of preaching all the possible harvest sermons, one verse to each. But a sermon it certainly is, in the writer's intention, even if the end product is an act of apparently spontaneous prayer or praise from the congregation: someone has selected the things they are to pray or praise God about.

"*Incisiveness*" is therefore a key word in the recipe. A parson hymn-writer who tries to make hymns of his sermons soon discovers this. It is not merely that he is confronted with the task of reducing a 20-minute sermon to five four-line verses, with all the exigencies of rhyme and scansion, and with a beginning, middle and end. It is also that he needs to "punch" his points in a quite different way. Much will depend on the effectiveness—the incisiveness—of particular words and images as the congregation puts its tongue to them; especially on the relevance to their own experience. I myself have used such phrases as "the world of *Monday morning*", "the girl who bore Him", God's *determined* (not 'devoted') lover", "*whole-time and anywhere*" (of Christian service), "*craggy and unkempt*" (of St John the Baptist), "*feeling dirty*", "*White-hot* in Thy possession" (of Pentecost). Each of them, I hope, brings the singer up short and makes him think what he is singing. One has, of course, to ensure that it does not also make him laugh—unless indeed that is the intention; but the vital thing, I should say, is to avoid clichés of any kind, both pulpit jargon and public relations jargon, though direct Biblical quotation has its proper place.

"*Some personal emotion*"—oh, yes. We are not hacks. We cannot ask other people to express in song emotions which we have not genuinely and deeply felt ourselves; and if there is a message, it must be one which we really want to give. It is, I am convinced, the quality of personal urgency which gives what I can only call "bite" to the words of certain hymn-writers (by contrast with the synthetic emotion conveyed by others) and makes their words come out as if new-minted. The 17th-Century writers had this quality, notably George Herbert. So did Charles Wesley: "Love divine" has a quality to survive any number of weddings. So did G. K.

Chesterton ("O God of earth and altar"). So did Mrs Alexander, when treating themes which moved her personally ("There is a green hill" and her translation of St Patrick's Breastplate) instead of inculcating second-hand attitudes thought proper to children, as in "Once in royal David's City." It will often be difficult to maintain the necessary integrity and spontaneity, because we shall usually be asked (if we are asked at all) for a hymn on a particular theme—for Easter, or a wedding—or for words to fit a particular tune. But if our hymns are to be important to other people, they must be important to us first.

"*Some evocative reference*": I confess to being not quite sure what the Archbishop meant by this, but can think of some applications.

(1) A hymn must, for one thing, evoke the Faith of which it is meant to be an expression. In doing so I think it should try to avoid theological technical terms, like other forms of jargon; and also certain well-worn habits of theological thought, like the obsession with typology (Old Testament analogies for New Testament events) which besets so many Office hymns, and others like "When God of old came down from heaven." But, for a religion rooted in history, the hymns must continually take us back to our roots; and so there should rightly be evocations (above all) of the Bible, and indeed direct quotations when they come in naturally and have not themselves become clichés. For those who know, a single word or phrase can open up a reference to a whole area of the Christian faith, and bring it meaningfully to mind.

(2) But a contemporary hymn needs also to be evocative of the world which the congregation knows, if it is to be sung with any reality. This applies not only to the words used, but even more to the attitudes of mind behind them. The world-denying Victorian concept of this life as a "vale of tears," to be got through as unscathed as possible on the way to heaven, is now actively rejected by congregations. This is a world-affirming age; its hymns must reflect it. It is also an age when we know much more than we did about the affairs of our fellow-men all over the world; its hymns must not be too parochial—God must not be thanked too glibly for a good harvest in England if there is a persisting famine in India. Congregations need hymns about the lack of time, about being an untriumphant and tiny percentage of the world, about a post-Darwin, post-Einstein, post-Teilhard doctrine of creation, about war as an evil thing, about the advance of knowledge and the "God of the gaps," about the things which are unshaken when so much is shaken, about fear and how to face it, perhaps about God as the ground of our being. Only if they evoke some of these things will our hymns speak to—and therefore from—our people. It may of course mean that the relevant hymns for 1960 are out of date by

1970. But if there is any truth in Fletcher's saying, "Give me the making of the songs of a nation and I care not who makes its laws," that ought not to be too high a price to pay.

(3) There is a third kind of evocation which may not have occurred to the Archbishop: that of lyric by tune and tune by lyric. We have got used to a situation in which, at best, a lyric will be reckoned to "go" to almost any tune of the appropriate metre; and in which, at worst, lyric writers think of musicians as their enemies, always trying to turn their songs into "music," so that they can ignore the words. But in fact the character of the tune must surely affect the character of the lyric, and vice versa. I myself prefer always to have a tune to work to knowing that its atmosphere will influence the character, and very possibly the theme, of what I write. But ideally this should be a two-way process, each element affecting and bringing about changes in the other; as happened, I believe, on a number of occasions with Rodgers and Hammerstein, notably in the creation of "Bali-Hai" for "South Pacific." Only so will there be a true marriage of words and music, mutually evocative. And then, as the Archbishop says, "though it will never be as good as good poetry, it may have an excellence of its own."

JOHN MASON NEALE

AS A TRANSLATOR OF LATIN HYMNODY

By ARTHUR L. PECK

A paper read at the Hymn Society's Conference at the premises of the Cambridge Union Society, July 12th, 1966, Dr F. Brittain in the Chair

PART I

All I can attempt to do is to remind you of some of the treasures which we have inherited through the work of John Mason Neale, and perhaps in some instances to bring to your notice hymns which you may have overlooked or forgotten. I shall make no attempt at exhaustiveness—that would be impossible, anyway—because I shall speak only, or almost only, of his translations from the Latin, and say nothing, or very little, about his translations from the Greek or about his original hymns. This means that we shall ignore over one-half of his hymnodic output; but I think that from one point of view we may claim that his translations from the Latin are the most important part of his work—at least, in practice they have proved to be the most important in the sense that far more practical use has been, and is, made of his translations from the Latin than of his translations from the Greek or of his original hymns. The index of first lines in the Collected Edition of his hymns contains about 400 entries. The number of Latin pieces translated

is 70 (i.e. counting as two hymns those usually divided for liturgical use); and in addition there is the Rhythm of Bernard, *Hora novissima*. Well over half these pieces are translations of the liturgical office hymns, that is to say, the hymns, some of them of great antiquity, which came to form an integral part of the divine office in the Western Church.

It may be interesting to remind you at this point how it was that Neale came to undertake the translation of these liturgical hymns.* One of the early results of the Oxford Movement was the desire to restore to the Anglican services the ancient Latin hymns (in translation, of course), and two of the earliest translators were Isaac Williams and John Chandler, some of whose hymns are in our modern hymn-books and are well known. Isaac Williams was a pupil of John Keble; his translations came out in a magazine between 1832 and 1837, and in a collected volume in 1839. Chandler's came out in 1837, followed by another volume in 1841. As it happened, it was not easy at that time to distinguish the ancient medieval office hymns from the office hymns which had been written in France during the 17th and 18th centuries, roughly from 1680 to 1780, and many of the hymns translated by Williams and Chandler were in fact the product of French churchmen during that period. For instance, 'Disposer supreme and Judge of the earth,' translated by Williams, is a version of 'Supremes quales Arbitr,' which first appeared in the Cluniac Breviary of 1686. 'O Word of God above,' also translated by Williams, is from an original, a very fine one too, in the Sapphic metre (of which I shall have more to say later), by Charles Guyet, S.J., which first appeared in the Paris Breviary of 1680. Another of Williams's translations, 'O heavenly Jerusalem,' for All Saints' Day, is from an original which first appeared in the Toulouse Breviary of 1777, and was therefore only just about 60 years old when Williams translated it. To describe hymns of such recent date, however beautiful they might be, as Hymns of the Primitive Church, was of course absurd; and Neale pointed out the absurdity in the *Christian Remembrancer* for October 1849. He might have stopped there, but he did not. He got down to work, and himself translated the *ancient* office hymns; and so the mistake made by Williams and Chandler gave us not only some fine translations from the 17th- and 18th-century Latin hymns of the French Church, but also Neale's magnificent series of translations from the more ancient hymns of the Western Church.

The office hymns for the Lesser Offices of Prime, Terce, Sext and None are invariable (except for Terce at Whitsuntide, when *Veni Creator Spiritus* replaces the usual hymn); Compline in the

* This paragraph summarises the account given by the Rev C. E. Pocknee in the introduction to his book *The French Diocesan Hymns and their Melodies*, 1954.

Salisbury Use has a range of seven hymns; the three greater offices Mattins, Lauds and Evensong have office hymns varying according to the season or according to the feast. The extent of John Mason Neale's work in this field will be obvious if we consider the number of hymns included in the Salisbury Breviary, and then the number of hymns translated by him. If my reckoning is correct, the total number of Latin hymns in the Salisbury Use for the Ordinary of the Season is 71; of these Neale translated 49. The total number of office hymns for the Common and Proper of Saints is 40; of these he translated 11. In addition to these, he also translated 8 out of 14 hymns which are found in the York Breviary and not in the Salisbury Breviary. We thus have a total of 68 office hymns translated by Neale, out of a maximum of 125. This in itself is a remarkable fact. But there is a further point to be remarked upon. Each of the translations except one, which I will mention in a moment, is in the same metre as the Latin original, and can therefore be sung to the original plainsong tune. It is clear from this that Neale's purpose was not to provide versions for private reading or meditation only, but for use in worship: and in this respect his purpose has been abundantly achieved. I said just now that only one of these translations is not in the same metre as the original. This is the 11th century office hymn for the 1st Evensong of feasts of Apostles and Evangelists, beginning *Annue Christe saeculorum Domine*, in the accentual iambic trimeter metre, which has been translated by the late Canon Lacey into this same metre (EH 174), 'Lord of Creation, bow thine ear, O Christ, to hear.' Neale translated it into a metre containing the same number of syllables, but of different rhythm:

'O Christ, Thou Lord of worlds / Thine ear to hear us bow.' But with a slight awkwardness this can be sung to the plainsong melody. So even in this case part of the provision still holds good. If it had not been for this one case, I think I should have made bold to say that Neale probably translated with a tune running through his head—the only satisfactory way of translating hymns. But whether that guess be correct or not, he clearly meant his hymns to be not museum pieces, but living parts of the divine service. And as I said, this intention was realised. I take first of all a typical office book for monastic use, the *Monastic Diurnal*, edited by the late Dr G. H. Palmer. This book does not provide for the office of Mattins, but includes all other offices. Out of all the occasions when a translation by Neale is available, there are only six in which Neale's translation is not used; and there are in fact 43 of his translations in this book, either verbatim as he wrote them or in a few instances with very small alterations.

We find Neale's work drawn upon in a similar way in the well-known hymn-books; and in giving you the details about these I will

include also figures about his translations from the Greek and original hymns.

I take first of all the standard edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. Here are the numbers of Neale's hymns contained in that hymnal:

Salisbury office hymns	24
Other Latin hymns	19
From the Greek	7
Original	12
	62

Even in the 1950 *Revised A & M*, a much inferior book, the figures are still quite high (although here, as in the standard edition, the compilers have made a large number of alterations in Neale's work):

Salisbury office hymns	21
Other Latin hymns	20
From the Greek	8
Original	8
	57

In *Songs of Syon*, as we should expect, the numbers are even higher (and here we find practically no alteration of Neale's text):

Salisbury office hymns	49
Other Latin Hymns	38
From the Greek	21
Original	10
	118

In the *English Hymnal*, again with very little alteration of text:

Salisbury office hymns	31
Other Latin hymns	20
From the Greek	12
Original	9
	72

But John Mason Neale has accomplished more than getting into Anglican hymn-books in bulk. He has even broken down the great barrier of sectarian prejudice. Seventy-four years after his death, in 1940, nine of his translations were admitted into the *New Westminster Hymnal*, though of course his contributions there are far outnumbered by Edward Caswall's, Frederick William Faber's, and Ronald Knox's. Nevertheless, there are from Neale's pen three office hymn translations (*Quem terra pontus aethera*, for Feasts of Our Lady, *Jesu corona virginum*, and *Aeterna Christi munera*, the York mattins hymn for feasts of Apostles); five other translations

from the Latin, including 'Jerusalem the golden'; and one from the Greek. Here is a quotation from the preface to the new and revised edition of the *Westminster Hymnal*, dated 1940, issued under the *imprimatur* of E. Morrogh Bernard, Vicar-General, and signed by Bishop David Mathew, Bishop Auxiliary of Westminster: "The committee considered that there was no objection in principle to the occasional use of a non-Catholic [*sic*] translation when this possessed outstanding merit." Later on in the same preface we read "At the same time the feeling and manner of J. M. Neale's 'Jerusalem the golden with milk and honey blest,' which is included in this edition, is at least equally alien to those who have been reared in the atmosphere of the homely Catholic services of the last 50 years, with their loud and draughty singing." It is indeed a joint triumph for Bernard of Morlaix and John Mason Neale that 'Jerusalem the golden' should have been admitted, albeit under the patronising description of a non-Catholic translation, into the Westminster Hymnal, and it is perhaps a fitting climax and crown to its admission into the hymn-books of many other Christian communities, some of the earliest of which Neale himself mentions in his preface to the 7th edition of his *Rhythm of Bernard of Morlaix*, dated St. Katherine's Day 1865, in which he writes as follows: "Bernard would have been surprised, could he have foreseen by how many varying sects his poem would be sung. The course of a few days brought me requests to use it from a Minister of the Scotch Establishment, a Swedenborgian minister, and a hymn book for the use of the 'American Evangelical Lutheran Church' sanctioned by the 'Minister of Pennsylvania', which extracts largely from it." Here we seem to find Rome, as on other occasions in liturgical matters, tardily bringing up the rear. But better late than never.

However, you will be tiring of statistics and bibliographical backwaters. It is time now to pass on to the actual content of Neale's work. And here we cannot do better than to begin, as he himself does in his *Medieval Hymns* (2nd ed., 1862), with the two great hymns of Venantius Fortunatus, *Pange lingua gloriosi proelium certaminis*, with its second part *Lustra sex qui iam peracta*, containing the wonderful stanza *Crux fidelis*, and the even greater hymn *Vexilla Regis prodeunt*, hymns used for many centuries in the divine office during Passiontide, at Mattins, Lauds and Evensong respectively, and also in the great liturgy of Good Friday. Upon the beauty of these hymns I cannot do better than quote the words of Sir Stephen Gaselee, which I heard him speak in the course of some lectures given by him in Cambridge about 40 years ago, on the J. H. Gray foundation. He is speaking of the author of them, Venantius Fortunatus, later Bishop of Poitiers, an Italian who became a Frenchman by adoption. Sir Stephen said: "A simple incident during his life at Poitiers was the cause of several hymns, two of

which are still used in the worship of the Church, and seem to me to be great poems. Radegund's convent . . . was placed under the dedication of the Holy Cross; and she received as a gift from the eastern Emperor Justin II what must be to her the most precious thing in the world—a relic of the True Cross. It entered Poitiers on November 19th, 569; and for this occasion were written Fortunatus' two hymns *Pange lingua* and *Vexilla Regis prodeunt*. When these are used with their ancient melodies—the former strictly appropriated to Good Friday, the latter to Passion Sunday—I confess that whether sung in Latin or English to me they are affecting in the highest degree." Incidentally, Venantius Fortunatus was just under 40 when he wrote these hymns; Neale's translation was made in or before 1851, when he was about 33.

There is a remarkable feature about Neale's translation of the *Vexilla Regis*. The word "triumph" occurs in it in two forms in two separate verses, the third and the fourth:

Amidst the nations, God, saith he,
Hath reigned and triumphed from the Tree.

Elect on whose triumphal breast
Those holy limbs should find their rest.

And in the second case the central syllable is on a rising neum of three notes. In the first case the first syllable is also on a neum of three notes, descending. No such word occurs at the corresponding place in the Latin original in either verse:

*Dicendo nationibus
Regnavit a ligno Deus.*

*Electa digno stipita
Tam sancta membra tangere.*

The word does, however, occur in one of the stanzas which do not form part of the hymn as used liturgically:

*Jucunda fructu fertili
Plaudis triumpho nobili.*

Neale: Decked with the fruit of peace and praise
And glorious with Triumphal lays
(Neale's capital T.)

There is no doubt that the whole hymn has an air of triumph about it, and this Neale has rightly expressed in his translation, by inserting the words *triumphed* and *triumphal* in verse 3 and 4. By contrast, here is *A & M's* version of verse 3:

How God the heathen's king should be,
For God is reigning from the Tree.

More literal, perhaps, but less effective—and it also lacks the fine alliteration, *triumphed from the Tree*. We can see here Neale's artistic instinct very clearly displayed. Here is a Roman Catholic

version in the *Compleat Office of the Holy Week* printed in 1687:

Where he to nations does attest
God on a tree his reign possessed.

And here is W. K. Blount, early 18th century, from the *New Westminster Hymnal*:

That which the Prophet-king of old
Hath in mysterious verse foretold
Is now accomplished, whilst we see
God ruling nations from a tree.

I think Ronald Knox could have done better, but I doubt whether he could have done better than John Mason Neale.

We now go on to the second of the Poitiers hymns, the *Pange lingua*, divided into two for liturgical use, the first part at Mattins in Passiontide, the second part at Lauds, beginning *Lustra sex qui iam peracta*. But even more striking than the use of this poem as an office hymn is its use during the so-called Worship of the Cross on Good Friday when the whole thing is sung as a meditation on the work of redemption, and after each verse is repeated as a refrain what is perhaps the finest stanza of all Neale's translations:

Faithful Cross, above all other
One and only noble Tree!
None in foliage, none in blossom,
None in fruit thy peer may be:
Sweetest wood and sweetest iron,
Sweetest weight is hung on thee.

Most readers have heard this sung to the office hymn melody . . . or to its degenerate, though still beautiful, Mechlin version, and some may have heard it sung to the exquisite polyphonic setting attributed to Palestrina; but in my opinion the finest setting of all is the melody referred to by Sir Stephen Gaselee, which is proper to the hymn when sung on Good Friday (*E.H.* 737). The beauty of this melody is indescribable; and the combined work of Venantius Fortunatus, John Mason Neale, and the composer of this tune has produced an incomparably revealing meditation on the central mystery of the Christian faith.

It is perhaps partly because my first acquaintance with this hymn was in the *EH* version, which does not use Neale's translation for the first part, but only for the second, that I feel that Neale is not so successful with the first half as he is with the second half. Those first four stanzas, and especially the second and third, are not at all easy to represent fully in English, as anyone who has tried to translate them will know, and it is no discredit to Neale that others have attempted them, and attempted them perhaps more successfully. But I do not think his version of *Crux fidelis* is ever likely to be surpassed. Here is Ronald Knox's attempt.

Hail, true Cross, of beauty rarest,
King of all the forest trees,
Leaf and flower and fruit thou barest,
Medicine for a world's disease;
Fairest wood and iron fairest,
Yet more fair who hung on these.

I think he fails; he fails because he introduces the additional rhymes for the disyllabic endings; he introduces the notion of medicine and disease, which comes in other stanzas of the hymn but not in this one; and he has "yet more fair" in the last line, whereas the original has:

dulce lignatum, dulce clavo / dulce pondus sustinens
—*dulce* three times repeated. And he ends with the weak pronoun *these*, whereas Neale has *thee*.

I will now go on to Neale's translations of some other early hymns—Ambrose's hymns, or those in his style. First, the hymn *Veni Redemptor gentium*, the office hymn for evensong on Christmas Eve. In the *EH* a number of alterations of Neale's text have been made, but here are two stanzas which are there printed as he wrote them:

O equal to thy Father, thou!
Gird on thy fleshly mantle now:
The weakness of our mortal state
With deathless might invigorate.

(These two lines were later incorporated into the *Veni Creator*:

*infrma nostri coropis
virtute firmans perpeti.*)

Thy cradle here shall glitter bright
And darkness breathe a newer light
Where endless faith shall shine serene
And twilight never intervene.

Here are three stanzas from the 6th century office hymn for Lauds on Friday, *Aeterna caeli gloria*:

[*EH* 56, vv. 3—5]

The day-star's rays are glittering clear
And tell that day itself is near;
The shadows of the night depart;
Thou, holy Light, illumine the heart.

Within our senses ever dwell
And worldly darkness thence expel:
Long as the days of life endure,
Preserve our souls devout and pure.

The faith that first must be possessed
Root deep within our inmost breast
And joyous hope in second place,
Then, charity, thy greatest grace.

And here are some verses from the hymn for Tuesday morning at
Lauds, from one of Prudentius' poems, *Ales diei nuntius*:

[EH 53, vv. 1—4]

The wingèd herald of the day
Proclaims the morn's approaching ray;
And Christ the Lord our souls excites,
And so to endless life invites.

Take up thy bed, to each he cries,
Who sick, or wrapped in slumber lies,
And chaste and just and sober stand,
And watch: my coming is at hand.

With earnest cry, with tearful care,
Call we the Lord to hear our prayer,
While supplication, pure and deep,
Forbids each chastened heart to sleep.

Do thou, O Christ, our slumbers wake,
Do thou the chains of darkness break,
Purge thou our former sins away,
And in our souls new light display.

Here is the opening stanza of the office hymn for None, ascribed
to St. Ambrose:

[EH 262]

O God, Creation's secret force,
Thyself unmoved, all motion's source,
Who from the morn till evening's ray
Through all its changes guid'st the day.

Translations of this sort, stand the test, as their originals have done,
of repeated use: simple, and dignified, and unaffected; and a fit
vehicle of prayer.

And here, though not a Salisbury office hymn, are two more
stanzas from Prudentius, for the Holy Innocents:

All hail, ye infant martyr flowers,
Cut off in life's first dawning hours,
As rosebuds, snapt in tempest strife
When Herod sought your Saviour's life.

You, tender flock of lambs, we sing,
First victims slain for Christ your King:
Beneath the Altar's heavenly ray
With martyr crowns and psalms ye play.

And here are some stanzas from another early hymn, probably
5th century, for Ascensiontide (part of *Aeterne Rex altissime*):

[EH 141, vv. 2—4]

Ascending to the throne of might
And seated at the Father's right,
All power in heaven is Jesu's own
Which here his manhood had not known.

That so, in Nature's triple frame,
Each heavenly and each earthly name,
And things in hell's abyss abhorred
May bend the knee and own him Lord.

Yea, Angels tremble when they see
How changed is our humanity,
That flesh hath purged what flesh had stained,
And God, the Flesh of God, hath reigned.

It would be possible to go on reading extracts of this sort from
the early office hymns, but we must now pass on to the later Latin
hymnody. And a very good transition is effected by the famous
hymn *Jesu dulcis memoria*, two centos from which are found as
office hymns in the Salisbury Breviary, and one as a Sequence in the
Salisbury Gradual, for the feast of the Holy Name, which was
instituted in 1457; though of course the hymn itself is much earlier,
and was at one time attributed to St Bernard. It also forms an
appropriate transition from another point of view, since its metre
is the same at that of many of the office hymns. The cento given in
the Salisbury Gradual of 1527 onwards is sometimes known as the
Rosy Sequence, and here are a few stanzas of Neale's translation
of it:

[EH 2238, v. 5; and Part 3, vv. 6—9]

No tongue of mortal can express,
No letters write its blessedness;
Alone who hath thee in his heart
Knows, love of Jesus, what thou art.

I seek for Jesus in repose,
When round my heart its chambers close,
Abroad, and when I shut the door,
I long for Jesus evermore.

With Mary in the morning gloom
I seek for Jesus at the tomb;
For him, with love's most earnest cry,
I seek with heart and not with eye.

Jesus, to God the Father gone,
Is seated on the heavenly throne;
My heart hath also passed from me,
That where he is, there it may be.

We follow Jesus now, and raise
The voice of prayer, the hymn of praise,
That he at last may make us meet
With him to gain the heavenly seat.

Another, and later, sequence, of the 13th century, attributed to Abp. Stephen Langton, is the so-called Golden Sequence, *Veni sancte Spiritus*, one of the few sequences that still survive in the modern Roman missal. This is so well known that I need hardly quote it. I will just remind you that it is in stanzas of six lines, of which the 3rd and 6th lines of each stanza rhyme on the syllables -ium:

lucis tuae radium . . .
veni lumen cordium . . .

and this rhyme-scheme has been preserved throughout by Neale in his translation:

Send thy light and brilliancy . . .
Come, the soul's true radiancy . . .

This, again, whether sung to its plainsong melody, or to the elder Webbe's 18th century tune, is very beautiful. One point only I will remark on: a point I mentioned some years ago in the correspondence columns of some journal. You may remember that the second half of the fourth stanza runs as follows:

flecte quod est rigidum,
fove quod est frigidum,
rege quod est devium.

In most printed books Neale's version of this is given as follows:

What is rigid, gently bend,
What is frozen, warmly tend,
Strengthen what goes erringly.

Strengthen is obviously a mistake for *straighten*, and this mistake has been corrected in recent printings of the *EH*.

(To be concluded in Bulletin 116.)

An obituary of John Hughes (1896—1968) has had to be held over to the next issue.