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EDITORIAL

In our issue of April, 1948 (Vol. II No. 2) we printed a very slightly shortened version of Issac Watt's Preface to his *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*. It has long been our intention to print in this *Bulletin* the Preface to his *Psalms*, which is in some ways an even more significant and interesting classical document of hymnology. In this issue, seven and a half years later, we carry out this intention, and the reader will find that nearly the whole of the issue is given to a reprinting of that remarkable work. We have printed it exactly as it stands in the 1719 edition, retaining all the inconsistencies of spelling and orthography and also the characteristic typographical conventions of that age; this we do on much the same principle which led Professor C. S. Lewis to quote Calvin and Luther in his *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* in sixteenth century English, namely in order that the reader may receive Watts's words in an historical perspective and judge them as the words not of a divine of the present day but of a liberal Independent of two and a quarter centuries ago. We trust that the liberty of

devoting so much space to a single document will be taken kindly by our readers.

We have to report with regret that the Conference which was proposed for this summer has been abandoned. The regret is for our missing the annual opportunity for meeting each other, and is by no means a rebuke to the Executive for their decision. Their decision is, we feel, wholly proper. Nothing is to be gained by holding Conferences for the sake of holding Conferences. It will surely be far wiser to hold infrequent and impressive Conferences than frequent and vapid ones; and it is only too easy for any society to dissipate its energy and tarnish its freshness of scholarship and inspiration by a too rigid adherence to a tradition of annual conferences which may not answer to any particular need either in the community or in our field of study. We propose to give our scanty energies — concentrated almost exclusively in the person of our tireless and enthusiastic Secretary — to the planning of a Conference at Croydon in 1956, somewhat on the lines of what we were able to do with such success at Sheffield in 1954. We hope to be able to make announcements about this in good time, and we rely on our members, especially those in the London area, to help us by their presence and their counsel in making a success of our first visit to the regions of Greater London.

The Preface, by Isaac Watts, to his
PSALMS OF DAVID

*imitated in the language of the New Testament and apply'd to
the Christian State and Worship.*

*An Enquiry into the right Way of fitting the Book of Psalms
for Christian Worship.*

Tho' the *Psalms of David* are a Work of admirable and divine Composure, tho' they contain the noblest Sentiments of Piety, and breathe a most exalted Spirit of Devotion, yet when the best of Christians attempt to sing many of them in our common Translations, that Spirit of Devotion vanishes and is lost, the Psalm dies upon their Lips, and they feel scarce any thing of the holy Pleasure.

If I were to render the Reasons of it, I would give this for one of the chief, (viz.) that the *Royal Psalmist* here expresses his own concerns in Words exactly suited to his own Thoughts, agreeable to his own personal Character, and in the Language of his own Religion; This keeps all the Springs of pious Passion awake, when every Line and Syllable so nearly affects himself: this naturally

raises in a devout Mind a more transporting and sublime Worship. But when we sing the same Lines, we express nothing but the Character, the Concerns, and the Religion of the *Jewish King*, while our own Circumstances and our own Religion (which are so widely different from his) have little to do in the sacred Song; and our Affections want something of Property or Interest in the Words, to awaken them at first, and to keep them lively.

If this *Attempt* of mine, thro' the divine Blessing, become so happy as to remove this great Inconvenience, and to introduce warm Devotion into this part of divine Worship, I shall esteem it an honourable Service done to the *Church of Christ*.

'Tis necessary therefore that I should here inform my Readers at large what the Title Page expresseth in a shorter Way, and assure them that they are not to expect in this Book an exact Translation of the *Psalms of David*; for if I had not conceived a different Design from all that have gone before me in this Work, I had never attempted a Service so full of Labour, tho' I must confess it has not wanted its Pleasure too.

In order to give a plain Account of my present Undertaking I shall first represent the Methods that my Predecessors have followed in their Versions: In the next place I hope to make it evident that those Methods can never attain the noblest and highest Ends of *Christian Psalmody*; and then describe the Course that I have taken, different from them all, together with some brief hints of the Reasons that induced me to it.

First, I will represent the *Methods that my Predecessors have followed*. I have seen above twenty Versions of the *Psalter* by Persons of richer and meaner Talents; and how various soever their Professions and their Prefaces are, yet in this Performance they all seem to aim at this one Point, (viz.) to make the *Hebrew Psalmist* only speak *English*, and keep all his own Characters still. Wheresoever the Psalm introduces him as a Soldier or a Prophet, as a Shepherd or a great Musician, as a King on the Throne or a Fugitive in the Wilderness, the Translators ever represent him in the same Circumstances: Some of them lead an Assembly of common Christians to worship God as near as possible and repeat that Worship in the ancient *Jewish* Forms, wherever the *Psalmist* uses them.

There are several Psalms indeed which have scarce any thing in them personal or peculiar to *David* or the *Jews*, such as Ps. i. xix. xxv. xxxvii. lxii. c. &c. and these if translated into the plain national Language are very proper Materials for Psalmody in all Times and Places; but there are but a few of this Kind in Comparison of the great Number which have something of *Personal Concerns*, *Prophetical Darknesses*, *Hebraisms*, or *Jewish Affairs* mingled with them.

I confess Mr. *Milbourn* and Mr. *Darby* in very different Verse

have now and then given an Evangelic Turn to the *Hebrew* Sense; and Dr. *Patrick*¹ hath gone much beyond them in this Respect, that he hath made use of the present Language of *Christians* in several Psalms, and left out many of the *Judaisms*. This is the Thing that hath introduced him into the Favour of so many religious Assemblies. Even those very Persons that have an Aversion to sing any thing in Worship but *David's* Psalms have been led insensibly to fall in with Dr. *Patrick's* Performance by a Relish of pious Pleasure; never considering that his Work is by no means a just Translation, but a Paraphrase; and there are scarce any that have departed farther from the inspired *Words of Scripture* than he hath often done, in order to suit his Thoughts to the State and Worship of *Christianity*. This I esteem his peculiar Excellency in those Psalms wherein he hath practis'd it. This I have made my chief Care and Business in every Psalm, and have attempted at least to exceed him in this as well as in the Art of Verse; and yet I have often kept nearer to the Text.

But after all, this good Man hath suffer'd himself so far to be carried away by Custom, as to make all the other personal Characters and Circumstances of *David* appear strong and plain, except that of a *Jew*; and many of them he has represented in stronger and plainer Terms than the Original². . . So that 'tis hard to find even in his Version six or eight Stanza's together in any Psalm (that has personal or national Affairs in it) fit to be assumed by a *vulgar Christian*, or proper to be sung by a *whole Congregation*. This renders the due Performance of Psalmody every where difficult to him that appoints the Verses: But 'tis extremely troublesome in those Assemblies where the Psalm is sung without reading it Line by Line, which yet is, beyond all Exception, the truest and the best Method; for here there can be no Omission of a Verse, tho' it be never so improper; but the whole Church must run down to the next Division of the Psalm, and sing all that comes next to their lips, till the Clerk puts them to Silence. Or to remedy this Inconvenience, if a wise Man leads the Song, he dwells always upon four or five and twenty Pieces of some select Psalms, tho' the whole 150 lie before him; and he is forced to run that narrow Round still for want of larger Provision suited to our present Circumstances.

I might here also remark to what a hard shift the Minister is put to find proper Hymns at the *Celebration of the Lord's Supper*,³

¹ Luke Milbourne, Vicar of St. Ethelburga, Bishopsgate; ejected 1662. *The Psalms of David in English Metre*, 1698.

Charles Darby, Rector of Kedington, Suffolk. *The Book of Psalms in English Metre*, 1704.

John Patrick, D.D., Preacher to the Charter House, London. *Century of Select Psalms for the Use of the Charter House*, 1679.

² Here are omitted a few lines of examples taken from Patrick's work.

³ Note that it is at the centrally 'New Testament' ordinance of the Lord's Supper that the tension is most acutely felt. It was for this Ordinance that Benjamin Keach had in 1673 composed the first hymns in free style.

when the People will sing nothing but out of *David's* Psalm-Book: How perpetually do they repeat some part of the xxiiiid or the cxviiith Psalm? And confine all the glorious Joy and Melody of that Ordinance to a few Obscure Lines, because the Translators have not indulg'd an Evangelical Turn to the Words of *David*; no, not in those very Places where the *Jewish Psalmist* seems to mean the Gospel; but he was not able to speak it plain by reason of the Infancy of that Dispensation, and longs for the Aid of a *Christian Poet*. Tho', to speak my own Sense freely, I do not think *David* ever wrote a Psalm of sufficient Glory and Sweetness to represent the Blessings of this holy Institution of *Christ*, even tho' it were explain'd by a copious Commentator; therefore 'tis my Opinion, that other *Spiritual Songs* should sometimes be us'd to render *Christian Psalmody* compleat. But this is not my present Business, and I have written on this Subject elsewhere.⁴

To proceed to the *Second* Part of my Preface, which is to shew how insufficient a strict Translation of the Psalms is to attain the design'd End.

There are several Songs of this *Royal Author* that seem improper for any Person besides himself; so that I cannot believe that the *Whole Book of Psalms* (even in the Original) was appointed by God for the ordinary and constant Worship of the *Jewish Sanctuary* or the *Synagogues*, tho' several of them might be often sung; much less are they all proper for a *Christian Church*: Yet the Way of a close Translation of this whole Book of *Hebrew Psalms* for *English Psalmody* has generally obtain'd among us.

Some pretend, 'tis but a just Respect to the holy Scriptures; for they have imbib'd a fond Opinion from their very Childhood, that nothing is to be sung at Church but the inspir'd Writings, how different soever the Sense is from our present State. But this Opinion has been taken upon Trust by the most part of its Advocates, and borrow'd chiefly from Education, Custom, and the Authority of others; which, if duly examin'd, will appear to have been built upon too slight and feeble Foundations; the Weakness of it I shall shew more at large in another Place: but it appears of itself more eminently inconsistent in those Persons that scruple to address God in Prose in any precompos'd forms whatsoever,⁵ and they give this Reason, Because they cannot be fitted to all our Occasions; and yet in Verse they confine their Addresses to such Forms as were fitted chiefly for *Jewish* Worshippers, and for the special Occasions of *David* the King.

⁴ Apart from the Preface to the *Hymns*, no work on Christian Psalmody by Watts seems to have been published, despite the promise made towards the end of the present Preface.

⁵ Here we have a reference to the extreme Puritan view, shared by most Independents but few Presbyterians, that any kind of preconceived prayer was inadmissible in worship. In the *Exceptions* presented by the Presbyterians against the proposed Book of Common Prayer in 1661 (which are chiefly the composition of Richard Baxter) this point is repeatedly urged.

Others maintain that a strict and scrupulous Confinement to the Sense of the Original is necessary to do Justice to the Royal Author; but in my Judgment the Royal Author is most honour'd when he is made most Intelligible; and when his admirable Composures are copy'd in such Language as gives Light and Joy to the Saints that live two thousand Years after him; whereas such a meer Translation of all his Verse into *English* to be sung in our Worship seems to darken our Religion, to damp our Delight, and forbid the *Christian Worshipper* to pursue the Song. How can we assume all his Words in our personal and publick Addresses to God, when our Condition of Life, our Time, Place and Religion are so vastly different from those of *David*?

I grant 'tis necessary and proper, that in translating every part of Scripture for our *Reading* or *Hearing*, the Sense of the Original should be exactly and faithfully represented; for there we learn what God says to us in his Word: But in *Singing* for the most part the Case is alter'd: For as the greatest Number of the Psalms are devotional, and there the Psalmists express their own personal or national Concerns; so we are taught by their Example what is the chief Design of Psalmody, (*viz.*) that we should represent our own sense of things in Singing, and address ourselves to God expressing our own Case; therefore the Words should be so far adapted to the general State of the Worshipers, as that we might seldom sing those Expressions in which we have no Concern: or at least our Translators of the Psalms should observe this Rule, that when the peculiar Circumstances of antient Saints are form'd into a Song for our present and publick Use, they should be related in an historical Manner; and not retain the personal Pronouns *I* and *We*, where the Transactions cannot belong to any of us, nor be apply'd to our Persons, Churches, or Nation.

Moses, *Deborah*, and the *Princes of Israel*, *David*, *Asaph* and *Habakkuk*, and all the Saints under the *Jewish* State, sung their own Joys and Victories, their own Hopes and Fears and Deliverances, as I hinted before; and why must we under the Gospel sing nothing else but the Joys, Hopes and Fears of *Asaph* and *David*? Why must *Christians* be forbid all other Melody, but what arises from the Victories and Deliverances of the *Jews*? *David* would have thought it very hard to have been confin'd to the Words of *Moses*, and sung nothing else on all his Rejoycing-days but the *Drowning of Pharaoh in the Fifteenth* of Exodus. He might have suppos'd it a little unreasonable when he had peculiar Occasions of mournfull Musick, is he had been forced to keep close to *Moses's Prayer in the Nineteenth Psalm*, and always sung over the *Shortness of Human Life*, especially if he were not permitted the liberty of a Paraphrase; and yet the special Concerns of *David* and *Moses* were much more akin to each other than ours are to either of them,

and they were both of the same Religion, but ours is very different.⁶

It is true, that *David* has left us a richer Variety of holy Songs than all that went before him; but rich as it is, 'tis still far short of the glorious Things that we *Christians* have to sing before the Lord. We and our Churches have our own special Affairs as well as they; Now if by a little Turn of their Words, or by the Change of a short Sentence we may express our own Meditations, Joys and Desires in the Verse of those *antient Psalmists*, why should we be forbid this sweet Priviledge? Why should we be ty'd up to Forms more than the *Jews* themselves were, and such as are much more improper for our Age and State too? Let us remember that the very Power of *Singing* was given to human Nature chiefly for this Purpose, that our warmest Affections of Soul might break out into natural or divine Melody, and the Tongue of the Worshipper express his own Heart.

I confess 'tis not unlawful nor absurd for a Person of Knowledge and Skill in divine Things to sing any Part of the *Jewish Psalm-Book*, and consider it meerly as the *Word of God*; from which by wise Meditation he may draw some pious Inferences for his own Use: For Instruction is allow'd to be one End of Psalmody. But where the Words are obscure *Hebraisms*, or personate a *Jew*, a *Soldier*, or a *King* speaking to himself or to God, this Mode of Instruction in a Song seems not so natural or easy even to the most skilful Christian, and 'tis almost impracticable to the greatest part of Mankind: And both the Wise and the Weak must confess this, that it does by no means raise their own Devotion so well as if they were speaking in their own Persons and expressing their own Sense: Besides that, the weakest Christian is ready to chime in with the Words he sings, and use them as his own, tho' they are never so foreign to his Purpose.

Now tho' it cannot be, that a large Book of lively Devotions should be so framed as to have every Line perfectly suited to all the Circumstances of every Worshipper, but after the Writer's utmost Care there will still be room for Christian Wisdom to exercise the Thoughts aright in Singing when the Words seem improper to our particular Case; yet as far as possible every Difficulty of this Kind should be removed, and such Sentences should by no Means be chosen which can scarce be used in their proper Sense by any that are present.⁷

I could never persuade myself that the best way to raise a devout Frame in *plain Christians* was to bring a *King* or a *Captain* into

⁶ Here and throughout this Preface Watts assumes the view that the Old Dispensation is entirely superseded by the New. This was the commoner Calvinist view in England, but it was considerably modified in *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1645 and 1649), which is the forerunner of the later opinion that the Old Covenant is renewed, or brought to life, rather than radically upset, by the New.

⁷ Observe here the characteristic Puritan insistence on congruity between what is said and what is intended. Sincerity and Truth had come, during the 17th century, to take a new place in the moral scheme of Christians.

their Churches, and let him lead and dictate the Worship in his own Style of Royalty, or in the Language of a Field of Battel. Does every menial Servant in the Assembly know how to use these Words devoutly, (*viz.*) *When I receive the Congregation I will judge uprightly*, Psalm lxxv. 2. *A Bow of Steel is broken my mine Arms*, — *As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me*, Psalm xviii. 34, 44. Would I encourage a Parish-Clerk to stand up in the midst of a Country Church, and bid all the People joyn with his Words and say, *I will praise thee upon a Psalter*; or, *I will open my dark Saying upon the Harp*; when even the Cathedrals sing only to the Sound of an Organ, most of the meaner Churches can have no Music but the Voice, and others will have none besides? Why then must all that will sing a Psalm at Church use such Words as if they were to play upon Harp and Psalter, when Thousands never saw such an Instrument, and know nothing of the Art? You will tell me, perhaps, that when you take these Expressions upon your Lips, you mean only, *That you will worship God according to his Appointment now, even as David worshipped him in his Day according to God's Appointment then*. But why will ye confine yourselves to speak one thing and mean another? Why must we be bound up to such Words as can never be address'd to God in their own Sense? And since the Heart of a Christian cannot joyn herein with his Lips, Why may not his Lips be led to speak his Heart? Experience itself has often shewn that it interrupts the holy Melody and spoils the Devotion of many a sincere Good Man or Woman, when in the midst of the Song some Speeches of *David* have been almost impos'd upon their Tongues, where he relates his own Troubles, his Banishment, or peculiar Deliverances; where he speaks like a Prince, a Musician, or a Prophet; or where the Sense is so obscure that it cannot be understood without a learned Commentator.

Here I may with courage address myself to the Heart and Conscience of many pious and observing Christians, and ask them, Whether they have not found a most divine Pleasure in Singing, when the Words of the Psalm have happily express'd their Frame of Soul? Have you not felt a new Joy spring within you when you could speak your own Desires and Hopes, your own Faith, Love and Zeal in the Language of the holy Psalmist? Have not your Spirits taken Wing, and mounted up near to God and Glory with the Song of *David* on your Tongue? But on a sudden the Clerk has proposed the next Line to your Lips with dark Sayings and Prophecies, with *Burnt-Offerings* or *Hyssop*, with *New-Moons*, and *Trumpets* and *Timbrels* in it, with *Confession of Sins* which you never committed, with *Complaints of Sorrows* such as you never felt, *cursing such Enemies* as you never had, giving *Thanks for such Victories* as you never obtained, or leading you to speak in your own Persons of *Things, Places* and *Actions*, that you never knew.

And how have all your Souls been discomposed at once, and the Strings of Harmony all untuned! You could not proceed in the Song with your Hearts, and your Lips have sunk their Joy and faultered in the Tune; you have been baulked and ashamed, and knew not whether it were best to be silent or to follow on with the Clerk and the Multitude, and sing with cold Devotion, and perhaps in Darkness too, without Thought or Meaning.

Let it be reply'd here, That to prevent this Inconvenience, *such Psalms or Sentences may be always omitted by him that leads the Song*, or may have a more useful Turn given in the Mind of those that sing. But I answer, Since such Psalms or Sentences are not to be sung, they may be as well omitted by the Translator, or may have a more useful Turn given in the Verse than it is possible for all the Singers to give on a sudden: and this is all that I contend for.

I come therefore to the *Third thing* I proposed, and that is to explain my own Design; which in short is this; (*viz.*) *To accommodate the Book of Psalms to Christian Worship*; And in order to this 'tis necessary to divest *David* and *Asaph*, &c. of every other character but that of a *Psalmist* and a *Saint*, and to make them always speak the common Sense and Language of a Christian.

Attempting the Work with this in view I have entirely omitted several whole Psalms, and large Pieces of many others; and have chosen out of them such Parts only as might easily and naturally be accommodated to the various Occasions of the Christian Life, or at least might afford us some beautiful Allusion to Christian Affairs: These have I copied and explained in the general Style of the Gospel; nor have I confined my Expressions to any particular Party or Opinion; that in Words prepared for public Worship and for the Lips of Multitudes, there might not be a Syllable offensive to sincere Christians whose Judgments may differ in the lesser Matters of Religion.

Where the Psalmist uses sharp Invectives against his personal Enemies, I have endeavoured to turn the Edge of them against our Scriptural Adversaries, *Sin*, *Satan* and *Temptation*. Where the Flights of his Faith and Love are sublime, I have often sunk the Expressions within the reach of an ordinary Christian. Where the Words imply some peculiar Wants or Distresses, Joys or Blessings, I have used Words of greater Latitude and Comprehension suited to the general Circumstances of Men.

Where the Original runs in the Form of Prophecy concerning *Christ* and his Salvation, I have given an Historical Turn to the Sense: There is no necessity that we should always sing in the obscure and doubtful Style of Prediction, when the Things foretold are brought into open Light by a full Accomplishment. Where the Writers of the New Testament have cited or alluded to any part of the Psalms, I have often indulged the Liberty of Paraphrase

according to the Words of *Christ* or his Apostles. And surely this may be esteemed *the Word of God* still, tho' borrowed from several parts of the Holy Scripture. Where the Psalmist describes Religion by the *Fear of God*, I have often joyn'd *Faith and Love* to it. Where he speaks of the Pardon of Sin thro' the *Mercies of God*, I have added the *Merits of a Saviour*. Where he talks of sacrificing *Goats or Bullocks*, I rather chuse to mention the Sacrifice of *Christ the Lamb of God*. When he attends the *Ark with Shouting* into *Zion*, I sing the *Ascension of my Saviour* into Heaven, or his *Presence in his Church* on Earth. Where he promises abundance of *Wealth, Honour and long life*, I have changed some of these typical Blessings for *Grace, Glory and Life Eternal*, which are brought to Light by the Gospel, and promised in the New Testament: And I am fully satisfied that more Honour is done to our blessed Saviour by speaking his Name, his Graces and Actions in his own Language, according to the brighter Discoveries he hath now made, than by going back again to the *Jewish* Forms of Worship, and the Language of Types and Figures.

All Men will confess that this is just and necessary in Preaching and Praying; and I cannot find a Reason why we should not sing Praises also in a manner agreeable to the present and more glorious Dispensation. No Man can be persuaded, that to read a Sermon of the Royal Preacher out of the Book of *Ecclesiastes*, or a Prayer out of *Ezra* or *Daniel* is so edifying to a Christian Church (tho' they were inspired) as a well-compos'd Prayer or Sermon deliver'd in the usual Language of the Gospel of *Christ*. And why should the very Words of the Sweet Singer of *Israel* be esteem'd so necessary to Christian Psalmody, and the *Jewish* Style so much preferable to the *Evangelical* in our religious Songs of Praise?

Now since it appears so plain that the *Hebrew Psalter* is very improper to be the precise Matter and Style of our Songs in a *Christian Church*; and since there is very good Reason to believe that it is left us not only as a most valuable Part of the Word of God for our Faith and Practice, but as an admirable and divine Pattern of spiritual Songs and Hymns under the Gospel, I have chosen rather to *imitate* than to *translate*; and thus to compose a *Psalms-book for Christians* after the Manner of the *Jewish Psalter*.

If I could be perswaded that nothing ought to be sung in Worship but what was of immediate Inspiration from God, surely I would recommend *Anthems*⁸ only, (viz.) the Psalms themselves as we read them in the Bible, set to Musick as they are sung by Choristers in our Cathedral Churches: For these are nearest to the Words of Inspiration; and we must depart far from those Words

⁸ Observe the assumption that an Anthem is not only Scriptural but taken from the Psalter. This was the almost universal rule in the 17th century. Moreover, between the decline of plainsong and the emergence of the anglican chant, this may well have been the only manner of singing the words of the prose Psalter available to congregations. Watts's words here seem to exclude the fashion of prose-chanting altogether.

if we turn them into Rhyme and Metre of any Sort. And upon the foot of this Argument even *The Scotch Version* which has been so much commended for its Approach to the Original, would be unlawful as well as others.

But since I believe that any *Divine Sentence* or *Christian Verse* agreeable to Scriptures may be sung, tho' it be composed by Men uninspired, I have not been so curious and exact in striving every where to express the antient Sense and Meaning of *David*, but have rather exprest myself as I may suppose *David* would have done, had he lived in the Days of *Christianity*. And by this means perhaps I have sometimes hit upon the true Intent of the Spirit of God in those Verses, farther and clearer than *David* himself could ever discover, as St. *Peter* encourages me to hope. I *Pet.* i. 11, 12. In several other Places I hope my Reader will find a natural Exposition of many a dark and doubtfull Text, and some new Beauties and Connexions of Thought discovered in the *Jewish* Poet, tho' not in the Language of a *Jew*. In all Places I have kept my grand Design in View, and that is *to teach my Author to speak like a Christian*. For why should I now address God my Saviour in a Song *with burnt Sacrifices of Fatlings and with the Incense of Rams*? Why should I pray to be *sprinkled with Hysop*, or recur to the *Blood of Bullocks and Goats*? Why should I *bind my Sacrifice with Cords to the Horns of the Altar*, or sing the Praises of God to *high sounding Cymbals*, when the Gospel has shewn me a nobler Atonement for Sin, and appointed a purer and more spiritual Worship? Why must I joyn with *David* in his Legal or Prophetic Language to curse my Enemies, when my Saviour in his Sermons has taught me to love and bless them? Why may not a *Christian* omit all those Passages of the *Jewish* Psalmist that tend to fill the Mind with overwhelming Sorrows, despairing Thoughts, or bitter personal Resentments, none of which are well suited to the Spirit of Christianity, which is a Dispensation of Hope and Joy and Love? What need is there that I should wrap up the shining Honours of my Redeemer in the dark and shadowy Language of a Religion that is now for ever abolished; especially when Christians are so vehemently warned in the Epistles of St. *Paul* against a Judaizing Spirit in their Worship⁹ as well as Doctrine? And what Fault can there be in enlarging a little on the more usefull Subjects in the Style of the Gospel, where the Psalm gives any Occasion, since the Whole Religion of the *Jews* is censur'd often in the New Testament as a defective and imperfect Thing?

Tho' I have aimed to provide for a Variety of Affairs in the *Christian Life* by the different Metres, Paraphrases, and Divisions of the Psalms (of which I shall speak particularly) yet after all,

⁹ Watts will, of course, have attributed the Epistle to the Hebrews to St. *Paul*.

there are a great many Circumstances that attend Common Christians, which cannot be agreeably express'd by any Paraphrase on the Words of *David*; and for these I have endeavour'd to provide in my Book of *Hymns*, that Christians might have something to sing in Divine Worship answerable to most or all their Occasions: in the *Preface* to that Book I have shewn the Insufficiency of the common Versions of the *Psalms*, and given further Reasons for my present Attempt.

I am not so vain as to expect that the few short Hints I have mentioned in that *Preface* or in this should be sufficient to justify my Performances in the Judgment of all Men, nor to convince and satisfy those who have long maintained different Sentiments. All the Favour therefore that I desire of my Readers is this, that they would not censure this work, till they have read my *Discourse of Psalmody*, which I hope will shortly be publish'd; but let them read it with serious Attention, and bring with them a generous and sincere Soul, ready to be convinced and to receive Truth where soever it can be found. In that Treatise I have given a large and particular Account how the Psalms of *Jewish* Composure ought to be translated for *Christian* Worship, and justify'd the Rules I lay down by such Reasons as seem to carry in them most plentiful Evidence and a fair Conviction.

If I might presume so much, I would entreat them also to forget their younger Prejudices for a Season, so far as to make a few Experiments of these Songs; and try whether they are not suited thro' Divine Grace to kindle in them a Fire of Zeal and Love, and to exalt the willing Soul to an Evangelic Temper of Joy and Praise. And if they shall find by sweet Experience any devout Affections raised, and a holy Frame of Mind awakened within them by these Attempts of *Christian Psalmistry*, I persuade myself that I shall receive their Thanks, and be assisted by their Prayers towards the Recovery of my Health and my publick Labours in the Church of Christ. Whatsoever Sentiments they had formerly entertain'd, yet surely they will not suffer their old and doubtful Opinions to prevail against their own inward Sensations of Piety and Religious Joy.¹⁰

¹⁰ Here follow some observations on the Divisions of the Psalter and the Method of Versification which we have omitted.

An example of Isaac Watts's Technique of Paraphrase.

PSALM CXXXII. 4, 5, 7, 8, 15-17. Com. Metre

A Church establisht.

[No sleep, nor Slumber to his Eyes
Good *David* would afford,
Till he had found below the Skies
A Dwelling for the Lord.

The Lord in *Zion* plac'd his Name,
His Ark was settled there;
To *Zion* the whole Nation came
To worship Thrice a Year.

But we have no such Lengths to go,
Nor wander far abroad;
Where'er thy Saints assemble now,
There is a House for God.]

Pause

Arise, O King of Grace, arise,
And enter to thy Rest;
Lo thy Church waits with longing Eyes
Thus to be own'd and blest.

Enter with all thy glorious Train,
Thy Spirit and thy Word;
All that the Ark did once contain
Could no such Grace afford.

Here, mighty God, accept our Vows,
Here let thy Praise be spread;
Bless the Provisions of thy House,
And fill thy Poor with Bread.

Here let the Son of *David* reign,
Let God's Anointed shine;
Justice and Truth his Court maintain,
With Love and Pow'r divine.

Here let him hold a lasting Throne;
And as his Kingdom grows,
Fresh honours shall adorn his Crown,
And Shame confound his Foes.

'STRENGTHEN FOR SERVICE, LORD, THE HANDS.'

A Note by the Rev. C. E. POCKNEE.

This hymn first appeared in the *English Hymnal*, 1906, and is now found in a number of other hymnals including the American Episcopal *Hymnal*, *B.B.C.* and *Songs of Praise*. The words are an English paraphrase of a prayer found in the Liturgy of Malabar. The prayer has long been recognised by liturgists as being of high antiquity. In its original form the first line of the prayer reads: "Strengthen, O our Lord, the hands that have been stretched out to receive the holy thing". This is a clear reference to the ancient custom of receiving the consecrated bread from the celebrant on the palm of the hand; and to which St. Cyril of Jerusalem makes reference in the fourth century in his catechetical lectures. It has, however, long been abandoned by oriental Christians. This evidence in the prayer, therefore, indicates an ancient source for the prayer.

In reading through an English translation, made by H. Burgess in 1853 of a Syriac poem by Ephraim of Edessa, Mr. Bunn was struck by the similarity of some phrases and some in our hymn. He brought the matter to my notice and I agreed that the similarity could not be accidental.

But Ephraim's poem was considerably longer than our hymn, or the prayer from which it was derived. One question was, therefore, what had happened to the first part of Ephraim's poem? Upon looking more closely into the East Syrian or Nestorian liturgy, (the Liturgy of Malabar is derived from the East Syrian), I found the first part of Ephraim's poem given as an alternative prayer for use on Sundays, the second part commencing "Strengthen O our Lord" being used on festivals of our Lord.

There remained yet another difficulty. Upon conflating both prayers in their translated versions and comparing them with Burgess's translation of Ephraim's poem I found some variations in order of the verses, and in particular the phrase "the hands that have been stretched out" was missing from Burgess. I now made three visits to the British Museum and consulted their Syriac expert. I found that Burgess had based his translation upon the Syriac text given by Assemani and Benedictus in their edition of the works of Ephraim Syrus. We compared the Assemani text with that given of the two prayers in the *Syro-Chaldean-Malabarensse Missal*. I learned that the text given by Assemani and Benedictus is not considered to be reliable and that it was "doctored" to comply with the Latin views of the editors. Indeed, Burgess suggests that this was the case in the notes that accompany his translation; but evidently he was unaware of the existence of the poem in its two parts in the East Syrian liturgy. These facts account for the varia-

tions between Burgess's version and those of our hymn, the latter being based on the prayer-text version.

The conclusion is, however, that our hymn is based upon a tetrasyllabic prayer ascribed to Ephraim the Syrian (died 373). It may, therefore, be claimed to be one of the oldest hymns now in regular use at the Holy Communion. Another English paraphrase by Adam Fox of the same text has recently appeared in *A.M.R.* 494 "Hands that have been handling holy things".

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Delete:

- 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 17, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 30, 33, 37, 39, 42, 45, 46, 51, 53, 56, 57, 63, 64, 65, 69, 73, 77, 82, 90, 92, 96, 97, 100, 101, 103, 106, 107, 108, 114, 117, 120, 122, 137, 144, 145, 146, 148, 150, 153, 156, 158, 159, 165, 167, 174, 179, 180, 182, 185, 187, 191, 194, 197, 200, 201, 202, 208, 210, 226, 234, 235, 237, 242, 243, 244, 245, 251, 254, 255, 258, 259.

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