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THE NEW SONG

(A sermon preached in St. Michael's Church, Croydon, on 12 June, 1956, before the Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland, by the Rev. J. W. Poole, Rector of Merstham, Honorary Chaplain of the Royal School of Church Music, sometime Precentor of Canterbury).

I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

Rev. 14. 1-3

When christian painters and poets set themselves to delineate eternal life, they make a picture of something in the nature of a party or a festival: the picture is full of singing and dancing, of people who are happy in one another's company, happy above all in the presence of Christ.

I know not, oh I know not
What social joys are there,
What radiancy of glory,
What bliss beyond compare.

They stand, those halls of Zion,
Conjubilant with song,
And bright with many an angel
And all the martyr throng;

The Prince is ever in them,
The daylight is serene,
The pastures of the blessed
Are decked in glorious sheen.

The halls of Zion are conjubilant with song; and the song that is on the lips of the company of heaven is a new song. 'No man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.' A new song for those who in Christ the Redeemer have been made new men, new women. 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new': all things, not excluding the praises which rise from the lips of the people of God, whether in heaven or in earth.

We who live under the christian dispensation cannot without an effort of the imagination realise how new, how startlingly new, was the christian revelation when it burst upon the world; how it altered the whole complexion of life for those who came under its impact. The soul of a people is in its literature: and the literature of that world, the literature of Greece and Rome, is suffused with melancholy; it is the literature of a people without hope, a people sick at heart for the transience of human affairs.

Lesbia, live to love and pleasure,
Careless what the grave may say:
When each moment is a treasure
Why should lovers lose a day?

Setting suns shall rise in glory,
But when little life is o'er,
There's an end of all the story—
We shall sleep and wake no more.

That is the Roman poet Catullus, writing half a century before the birth of Jesus Christ.

But when little life is o'er,
There's an end of all the story.

There is the burden of his song; as it is also the burden of all the epitaphs in the Greek Anthology. It is a song as old as humanity. But the song that rises from christian lips is a new song: and the burden of this new song is in the gospel. 'I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live'. The new song echoes among the catacombs of Rome, where the earliest christians inscribed the names of their dead, adding a brief phrase of confidence and hope:

Mayest thou live among the saints;
Refresh thyself among the holy spirits;
Mayest thou live in God;
Peace be with thee;

or, briefest of all, the two words 'In Christ', two words in which the whole gospel is contained. The new song reverberates again in the words of one of our poets:

Even such is Time, that takes in trust
Our youth, our joys, our all we have,
And pays us but with earth and dust:
Who, in the dark and silent grave,
When we have wandered all our ways,
Shuts up the story of our days.
But from this earth, this grave, this dust
My God shall raise me up, I trust.

That is the authentic christian temper: there is the christian hope. Jesus and the resurrection was the text of the first christian sermons. Jesus and the resurrection was the new thing which burst upon the ancient world of the Mediterranean, and which set a new song ringing down the centuries, a song whose echoes are heard always in the greatest christian hymns. Dr. Routley has lately shown us, in a beautiful book,[1] how the hymns most commonly used today among christian congregations in England do in fact expound the whole christian creed: but I believe he will hold with Bernard Manning (as I certainly do) that 'the greatest hymns are christian, thoroughly and irrevocably christian; and when I say christian (writes Manning) I mean that they concern Christ, not that they are what is called christian in spirit, or indirectly or unconsciously christian'.

[1] Erik Routley, *Hymns and the Faith* (John Murray, 1955).

My heart is full of Christ, and longs
Its glorious matter to declare.
Of him I make my loftier songs . . . .

'That (he says) is the confession of the greatest hymn-writers. They go back to the New Testament, and especially to the gospels. They are not merely theistic, like the psalm paraphrases; great as some of these are, they miss the highest note.'

Even, then, 'O God our help', which is a great hymn, an indispensable hymn — even this misses the highest note; because there is in it no echo of that new song which rings always in the ears of those who in Christ have been made new men.

'Still less' (Manning goes on) 'are the greatest hymns songs of human aspiration or of human fellowship'. Indeed they are not. Then what is to be made of these verses, which appeared in the *Methodist Hymn Book* in 1904 and have since — alas! — turned up again in a book widely used in the schools of England, used sometimes even in the Church of England?

These things shall be! A loftier race
Than e'er the world hath known, shall rise
With flame of freedom in their souls
And light of science in their eyes.

They shall be gentle, brave, and strong,
To spill no drop of blood, but dare
All that may plant man's lordship firm
On earth and fire and sea and air.

Man's lordship, indeed! Put these lines alongside of holy scripture, and you see at once how remote their temper is from the temper of the christian believer, who joins with the company of heaven in celebrating not man's lordship but God's condescension: the company of heaven sing a new song (as they fall down before the Lamb) saying 'Thou art worthy — for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.'

So long as you fancy yourself to be master of the situation, you cannot receive the gospel. The gospel can only be received by those who are conscious of their need, conscious that they are frail and wayward children. I recall a remark made to me, many years ago now, by one who was then among my superior officers. 'Remember, Joseph', he said to me with great emphasis, 'remember that if ever it falls to you to arrange my funeral service, you are to put in *all* the penitential psalms.'

And if a hymn expresses tolerably well these two themes — the need of men and the condescension of God — then I for my part

will not too squeamishly exclude it from public worship. The other day an acquaintance of mine (a don of my own college) was expressing to me his dislike of the hymn 'Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us': he dislikes in particular the line referring to our Lord,

Lone and dreary, faint and weary.

We ought not, he argues, to address our Lord as dreary. The fact is, the word dreary has changed its complexion since this hymn was first published in 1821. A century ago a dreary man was simply a sad man, a melancholy man: and if our Lord was 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief', then to describe him as 'lone and dreary' is one way of saying so. I own I prefer the biblical phrase to the phrase of the hymn: but my own preference is neither here nor there, when I recall how often this hymn is chosen by those who present themselves to be married at the altars of the National Church. They come seldom to church, many of them; they understand very dimly what christianity is: but one thing they understand clearly enough. As they stand on the threshold of married life they are conscious that they are not masters of the situation: they are aware of their need as frail and wayward children. And when they ask for a hymn which expresses their own need, and the condescension of God to their need, — why then my pastoral care urges me to allow and to use a hymn which on purely aesthetic grounds I might reject. John Newton was right when he pointed out, two hundred years ago, that hymns 'should be hymns, not Odes, if designed for public worship and for the use of plain people' The people of God consists, for the most part, of plain people. 'Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.' This is as true now as it ever was: and for plain people, plain hymns are best. I do not mean by this to encourage doggerel verse or doggerel music: I do mean that those hymns are best which avoid what is fanciful or subtle or erudite, and which say plainly in the ears of plain people what most needs to be said. Those hymns above all are best, which drive clearly towards the central affirmation of our faith; that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself. For this is the burden of that new song which none can learn but those that have been redeemed from the earth,

That undisturbèd Song of pure content,
Ay sung before the sapphire-coloured throne
To him that sits thereon
With saintly shout, and solemn Jubily

The song of them that triumph,
The shout of them that feast

in the kingdom of God.

TWO NOTES

by MAURICE FROST

OXFORD NEW

When did it first appear in print? On the assumption that 1770 was the approximately correct date for Isaac Smith's *Collection,* in which the tune appears anonymously, that book is given as the one in which it first appears. But the date is certainly too early for earliest surviving edition, even if it is equally certain that there was at least one issue previously without a Supplement (see Humphries and Smith, *Music Publishing in the British Isles,* under Davenhill (Mary), p. 127.). 1780 is nearer the mark for the B.M. copy. There now appears in the B.M. from the Church House Collection a book entitled *Twenty Psalm Tunes in three Parts . . . Composed by the late Mr. Coombes and other eminent Masters. Engraved and printed by Longman, Lukey and Co., for T. Naish, Goldsmith, Cutler and Music seller in Bristol.* Mr. Humphries dates it c. 1775 because Naish's name appears only in the directory for that year. OXFORD NEW has the heading "Psalm cviii. C.M. Mr. Coombes." Someone has inked in the name "Camberwell Tune".
The Coombes referred to is William Coombes, since J. M. (senior) died in 1820, aged 51; and J. M. (junior) died in 1872, aged 72.

I have to thank Mr. Finlay for drawing my attention to the book, and Mr. Humphries for further details.[1]

Which tune called LUDLOW was it to which Cowper is said to have written "O for a closer walk with God" (*S.P. Discussed,* p. 71)? Certainly not Ravenscroft's, for that is S.M. Dr. Routley reminded me that there is a pleasing tune of that name in Rippon's collection, but I think we need something rather earlier in date than that. Ralph Harrison may give us the clue in the tune he so names in volume ii of his *Sacred Harmony,* p. 15 No. 177. He attributes the tune to Theo. Smith.

It appears first in print in A. Williams' *The Universal Psalmodist,* 1763, as "Foundling's Psalm 27. O.V. or to the Foundlings Hymn." I find it next in John Arnold's *Church Music Reformed,* 1765, without a name, and set to "Whilst Shepherds watch'd their Flocks by Night".

When we look at the Founding Hospital's own collection of 1774 we find the tune is the first in the book, headed "The Foundling's Hymn taken out of Psalm xxvii. Set by Mr. Smith". When W. Russell re-edited the Collection in 1809 he added to Mr. Smith's name "the first Organist of the Chapel".

The tune was evidently in use and well known long before it appeared in the 1774 book. Arnold, in the preface to the book named above commends the singing, and collection of tunes in use at the Foundling Hospital, to all who are interested in reform.

1 Dr. Frost later writes that he is sceptical of the existance of William Combes: there was a George Coombes, organist of Bristol Cathedral (d. 1769) who may be the missing composer.

REVIEWS

Hymns as Poetry, an anthology compiled by Tom Ingram and Douglas Newton. Constable, 328pp., 25s.

This is an interesting, and perhaps a rather strange book. Members of this society will hardly need to be reminded of the hazards that confront anyone who attempts to judge hymns 'as poetry'. The matter has been gone over in this journal at least once. If you judge hymns 'as poetry' you are judging them from, as it were, an oblique angle. It is like judging houses as works of art: some of them may be, and there is no reason why any should not be. Yet there are plenty of buildings which thus judged might be thought not good houses, but which are in fact good houses. I happen to think that my twenty-year old Morris has a far more agreeable line of design than a 1956 Cadillac; but if I wanted to transport my mother-in-law to Newcastle in six hours I know which of the two I should choose, had I the choice. By the same token this collection will give some surprise to hymn-lovers simply because so much of what they, as hymn-lovers and hymn-users, admire is not here. For example — we turn at once, do we not? to Isaac Watts, and find that he is represented by 'When the eternal bows the skies' (Psalm 114), 'Where e'er my flatt'ring Passions rove' (*Horae Lyricae,* here dated 1709), 'Adore and tremble, for our God' (*Hymns,* I 43), 'In Gabriel's Hand a mighty Stone' (I 59), 'I send the Joys of Earth away' (II 11), 'My Drowzie Powers, why sleep ye so?' (II 25), 'Lord, we are blind, we Mortals blind' (II 26) 'Up to the Fields where Angels lie' (II 41), 'When I can read my Title clear' (II 65), 'There is Land of pure Delight' (II 66), 'The Majesty of *Solomon*' (II 113), 'Man has a soul of vast Desires' (II 146), 'Let the wild *Leopards* of the Wood' (II 160) 'When I survey the wondrous Cross' (III 7), 'Where'er I take my Walks abroad', 'Let Dogs delight to bark and bite', 'How doth the little busy Bee', 'Why should our Garments (made to hide . . .)', 'Hush, my Dear, lie still and slumber', all from *Divine Songs,* and finally, 'Jesus shall reign' and 'Our God, our Help', from the Psalms.

That in itself, I think, sufficiently indicates the method of the compilers. Their object is to provide a series of poems that can be enjoyed by a reader without his taking any account of their original purpose as hymns. That, at least, must be their general purpose. In their definition of 'hymns', however, they have allowed themselves to include lines not originally meant for public singing but which have later become hymns by convention. Therefore two poems of George Herbert get in, 'Antiphon' and 'King of glory' (not the familiar hymn, but the other poem, in sevens throughout, beginning with those words). It is astonishing to me that Robert Bridges has no place. Translations have not been admitted: but so much of Bridges is free paraphrase and even new composition in those hymns

which begin from the translation of a line or verse from a foreign original, that he should surely be treated as a hymn writer in his own right. 'The duteous day', surely an incomparable poem in hymnody, should have been there.

William Cowper has three — 'O for a closer walk', 'There is a fountain' and 'God moves' — this being the one case where a hymnologist would almost certainly have made the same selection as the editors of this book.

There is a good deal here that is not in the *Oxford Book of Christian Verse,* and it makes a very pleasant collection of religious lyrics. Textual work has been so well done (revealing, for example, 'All things bright and beauteous . . . All things wise and wonderous', that it makes a handy guide to the original texts of hymns. There is a selection of 'Revival' hymns which is taken down to 1953, and which makes us wonder why English hymnody at other levels stops at 1908. 'The Spiritual Railway' will afford diversion, we feel sure, to those members (not a few, we suspect) who are not above the *Railway Magazine* and the monthly orations of C. J. Allen (who is a writer of hymn tunes as well).

But no Chesterton! That was surely a sorry error.

An interesting book, and I think without doubt a quite genuine and fresh piece of judgment.

The First Free Church Hymnal, by Ernest Payne, D.D.

Readers will be glad to know that this learned and attractive article by Dr. Payne is available as a pamphlet. We have received a complimentary copy with no price marked, nor publisher's name : but application to 4 Southampton Row, W.C. 1, the Central Offices of the Baptist Union, will provide these details. The subject of the paper is the early hymnody of the Anabaptists, a subject only sketchily covered even in *Julian.* It hardly needs to be said that it is here dealt with in a manner that makes the article required reading for any serious student of hymns.

Folksong — Plainsong, by G. B. Chambers, The Merlin Press, 10, Fitzroy Street, W. 1. 120 pp., 18s.

Although this book is not primarily concerned with hymnody, all who are interested in church music, particularly in plainsong, should regard it as a work of primary importance. It has a commendatory preface by Dr. Vaughan Williams, and its thesis, that plainsong is not primarily and by nature an inhibited ecclesiastical idiom, but rather a primitive diction closely associated with the earliest kind of folk-song, is an exciting one. There are a few musical examples, and the whole is nicely presented. It forms a weighty contribution to a vitally important subject.

Readers will surely be glad to know that Dr. Vaughan William's address to the Society in June has been printed by the Oxford University Press in a leaflet distributed in celebration of the Jubilee

of the *English Hymnal.* No price is mentioned (neither is the Hymn Society), but members who desire a copy can almost certainly get one for a small price by applying to the Oxford University Press at Amen House, E.C. 4.

E.R.

'JESU' and 'JESUS'
a point of orthography
by K. L. Parry

A correspondent has protested to me against the use of "Jesu's" in the hymn 'Now to the Lord a noble song' by Isaac Watts, as printed in *Congregational Praise.* It occurs twice, 'Jesu's face' and 'Jesu's name'. He points out that gramatically it is an atrocity. The only permissible use of Jesu is in the vocative case. I think he is right about this. Watts has "Jesus' face" and "Jesus' name". Fowler points out that it was formerly customary, when a word ended in —s to write the possessive with an apostrphe but no additional s, e.g. Mars' hill, Watts' hymns. But in modern usage we add the s and the syllable, e.g. Brother James's air, Watts's hymns. But in verse and in poetic or reverential contexts, Fowler says, the old usage is retained and the number of syllables is the same as in the subjective case. "Jesus" is thus correct and has only two syllables. Another example occurs is "All hail the power of Jesus' name". In its first appearance in the Gospel Magazine Perronet wrote " Jesu's name". Rippon seems to have changed it to "Jesus' name" which is used in the Oxford Hymn Book and in Hymns Ancient and Modern (Revised), Here we must choose between being true to the original or perpetuating a howler. In Miss Proctor's hymn 'My God I thank Thee, who hast made'. most hymn books give "on Jesu's breast" in the last line, but the Revised Church Hymnary gives the more correct "Jesus' breast".

The question also arises of the use of Jesu as a vocative. There seems to be no consistency here. Wesley has "Jesu lover of my soul" but also "Jesus, by strength and hope". The Jesu in 'Jesu lover of my soul' gives it that note of familiarity to which many people object, and yet we must surely retain here what Wesley so deliberately wrote. "Jesu the very thought of Thee" is also defensible as a translation from the Latin. But elsewhere it is surely better to conform to modern usage. In Luke 17 : 13, the A.V. gives 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on me'.

ANGLICAN CHANTS

This Society has never professed any interest in that strange and (we gather from all foreign visitors) typically English musical form, the anglican chant. And yet this form of singing praises is surely not entirely outside our sphere of action, and a note or two about it are prompted by the publication last year of *The Anglican Chant Book,* edited by The Rev, R. E. Sibthorp, and published by

Novello & Co., 160 Wardour Street, W. 1, at 9s.

Now there is no doubt at all that the Anglican chant is the Cinderella of musical forms. Among a large section of musicians of the church, it is considered not quite nice to have anything to do with it. There is no need to rehearse its history here; it is sufficiently shown in various places that the anglican chant is a direct and perfectly legitimate musical development from the plainsong chant. You have your plainsong chant; you add a faux-bourdon, and you have the beginning of an anglican chant. The bar-line and the dance-discipline arrive with the Restoration, and there the fun begins. We here submit, without going into a long disquisition on a subject we believe to be more interesting than most people admit, that the difference nowadays beween singing the psalms to plainsong and singing them to anglican chants is a total difference of approach to the use of the psalms in worship.

If you hold that singing the psalms in worship is reading the Bible communally, as it were, and that it is the Christian's duty thus to read the Psalter daily or weekly in course, then you will hold that it must be made as practicable as may be for the whole congregation to join in the disciplined reading. The answer is clearly plainsong. To sing the psalms from an unpointed prayer-book to anglican chants is nowadays to invite confusion in a congregation where there are likely to be any who do not intimately know the habits of that particular church. True, the confusion is often perfectly amiable, and nobody *minds* very much if you make an error, but obviously it provides a certain distraction from the duty of reading the psalter to music. If on the other hand you are looking for *interpretation,* you find the anglican chant indispensable, bebecause it belongs by nature to a different kind of music, to the kind of music in which devices of rhetoric abound; in plainsong they do not abound. Indeed we are always told that the kind of device which is appropriate to the accompaniment of anglican chants is intolerable in the accompaniment of plainsong.

To offer an opinion, however, with which many will surely find themselves at odds. I am unable to see why both kinds of rendering should not be regarded as legitimate. I believe those to be wrong who claim, for any reason, that the music of the centuries after 1600 is less religious, and could never be anything but less religious, than the music of the centuries before. There is a distinct feeling that way among modern German Lutherans, who will hardly admit a chorale later than 1662; and many plainsong enthusiasts sound the same note. I believe frankly, that this is fugitive and defeatist and that if we will only admit that we are all sinners we can admit also that every age has something to say, and that our own age ought to find something to say, by way of interpreting its faith in music. I am not arguing that plainsong is archaic; I am content to be told that it is universal.

it is universal. I am saying only that 'modern' music does something

quite different, says something quite different, and that what it does and says are not altogether beneath the notice of serious musicians.

If that be admitted, we allow ourselves to look without flinching at the enormous output of anglican chants during the years 1700 to 1900, and wonder on what principles we ought to choose them.

Now Canon Sibthorp's collection has this great initial advantage, that it takes its music seriously. Authors' dates and appointments are given in a full index, and where a chant is known to have been written for the psalm to which it is here set, its number is marked with a sign (S). Canon Sibthorp does not eschew the intrusive crotchet (and truth to tell some chants written with passing notes look very strange without them); he is traditional enough to include the chant made out of the slow movement of Beethoven's 'Pathetic' Sonata to Psalm 122 (which seems to me terrible, venerable though the association is). Psalm 136 always offers a chance of going to town (unless you stay at home with Oakeley's Quadruple), and here we have a thumping triple chant by Dr. Henry Havergal, one of the discreet admissions from contemporaries. Stanford in A flat and C for Psalms 149 and 150 are here, and so is the contrastingly boring Stanford in E flat for Psalm 147 (indefensible). Attwood's ridiculous tune that goes straight up the scale and down again is set to part of Psalm 105 — and thirteen verses of that is quite enough. Tompkins's beautiful single is set to Psalm 61, and Gerald Knight's surging chant in G to Psalm 98. Taken all round it is very judicious book, organized with scholarship and imagination.

One last mischievous word. It is becoming a positive embarrassment, now that congregational demands have imposed transpositions on our editors, to refer to chants by author's name and key. 'Which Attwood in D do you mean?' is the kind of question with which we are now constantly bothered. Will some modern Ravenscroft come forward and produce some appropriate names for the chants in common use? We suggest not names of pretty villages in Somerset — let us leave those to the editors of the *BBC Hymn Book* — but names of Old Testament characters and places. How good it would be to be able to speak always of Attwood in D (I mean the one that begins with three rising notes and then drops a sixth: what a nuisance this is) as 'Hezekiah', of Stanford in A flat as 'Shechem'. Why not? Nobody has yet called a hymn tune 'Uggle-barnby', and we need not saddle a chant with the name 'Luz'. But there are Old Testament names of dignity and euphony that would come with singular appropriateness. I think I should wish to call Stainer's chant in E minor (I mean the one that begins on G and falls a diminished fourth) 'Herman', who was the reputed author of Psalm 88, and Tompkins in A flat, with its wonderful sense of peace and spaciousness, 'Sharon'. But I must confess that there are many which I should wish to group together under the name 'Edom' and forget them.

E.R.

MEMBERSHIP LIST

The following members have recently joined the Society :

290. Mr. H. A. White, A. Mus. T.C.M., 149 Murdoch Rd., Birmingham 21
291. Mr. H. W. Jones, 4 Malpas Grove, Wallasey, Cheshire.
292. Mr. D. C. B. Harris (Hon. Treasurer), 28 Halford Road, Stratford on Avon.
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311. Rev. R. Wayrider, Wesley Manse, Hadfield, Manchester.
312. Rev. H. W. Dennis, 41 Stafford Road, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset.
113. Rev. W. J. Cummings, 909 Diamond Street, Williamsport, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

SUBSCRIPTION

We have to acquant our faithful readers with the mournful news that our subscription must go up to ten shillings and sixpence a year from the 1st January, 1957. We need not rehearse the only too familiar reasons for this. A gesture towards stability will be, of course, the recruitment of a substantial number of new members. We trust that our readers will find that the value received in the Bulletin and other activities of the Society is conformable to this increase.

We would also remind our readers that we are still committed to the production of a new *Julien*, and that we need a good deal more money in our *Julien* finds before we can happily contemplate the launching of Mr. Bunn's monumental work. The work proceeds steadily. But when publication comes, we hope to be able to back the publication with a good capital sum, and any contributions over and above their subscriptions which readers feel able to give us from time to time we shall receive with great gratitude, and devote to that end.