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THE THEOLOGY OF ISAAC WATTS AS ILLUSTRATED IN HIS HYMNS

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(This is the greater part of a paper read by Mr Payne to the Society at its Oxford Conference in July 1948.)

WATTS, it must be admitted, was not by nature or through application a great theologian. But the hymns a man writes—or if he cannot write hymns, the ones he likes to sing—are usually a surer guide to his faith than his attempts at theological rationalization.¹ There are, therefore, some dangers in the title of this paper. It might have been better to borrow a phrase from one of J. H. Hutton's books and speak of "Guidance in matters of Faith from the Hymns of Isaac Watts." Such a title would, I think, have satisfied Watts himself better. For though he stood on the threshold of the Age of Reason, indeed lived on into it, he was very conscious of the limitations of reason.

Where reason fails
With all her pow'rs,
There faith prevails
And love adores.

(*Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, Vol. III 38.)
(Cf. Vol. II 87 v. 3, Vol. II 26 v. 1.)

Five of Watts's poems find a place in Lord David Cecil's *Oxford Book of Christian Verse*, but they represent him less satisfactorily than the one poem in the *Oxford Book of Mystical*

¹ Cf. Horton Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans*, p. 180—"If the Puritan could not subscribe to the Apostles' or the Nicene Creed, his praises sounded forth his evangelical beliefs. If he could not say his creed, he sang it."

Verse, the fine stanzas entitled "The Incomprehensible" which begin :

Far in the Heavens my God retires :
My God, the mark of my desires,
And hides His lovely face ;
When He descends within my view,
He charms my reason to pursue,
But leaves it tir'd and fainting in th' unequal chase.

What Baron von Hügel called the "true creatureliness of feeling" comes out again and again in Watts's verse. He could have understood something at any rate of Barth's emphasis on the gulf between God and man.

There is, strangely enough, little or no evidence of anything but the almost haphazard bringing together of Watts's pieces. Watts was not offering his friends a theological system in verse, or a necessarily comprehensive selection of subjects. What is at once clear is that he was a convinced and enthusiastic Protestant. He believed in justification by faith alone. He planted himself firmly on the rock of Scripture. Watts's sturdy Protestantism comes out in his special verses composed for 5th November (II 92), and in his patriotic devotion to William and Mary (II 1; II 149). But that was only to be expected of one whose father had several times suffered imprisonment as a Nonconformist, and who was convinced that the occasional indulgence of dissent by Charles II and James II masked papist plottings. Watts was in his early teens at the time of the Glorious Revolution of 1688. By and large there is surprisingly little evidence of scars left by the sufferings of his boyhood. The famous "Martyrs' Hymn" (I 41) beginning

Those glorious minds, how bright they shine.

is a paraphrase of Revelation viii and does not seem to have any special contemporary reference. Watts's metrical version of Psalm cvii is headed "A Psalm for New England" and mentions the conflicts of the colonists with the Red Indians. But his feelings—or should we say his prejudices?—occasionally show themselves and in interesting fashion. He interrupts his metrical paraphrase of the Magnificat with these stanzas on Mary :

The Highest saw her low estate,
And mighty things his hand hath done ;
His overshadowing pow'r and grace
Makes her the Mother of his Son.

Let every nation call her bless'd,
And endless years prolong her fame ;
But God alone must be ador'd ;
Holy and rev'rend is his name.

(I 60.)

In some verses on "Christ's Intercession" we come suddenly on this :

Let papists trust what names they please,
Their saints and angels boast ;
We've no such advocates as these,
Nor pray to th' heavenly host.

(II 37), (cf. II 64.)

But these are rare, pardonable and probably youthful excrescences. More important is it to remember that we owe Watts's best known composition, his magnificent version of Psalm xc, to the feeling of relief that came over him at the death of Queen Anne, and the removal of renewed threats of legislative action against Dissenters.

Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

For more than two centuries Englishmen have turned to these words in times of national emotion, much as Continental Protestants turn to Luther's "Ein' Feste Burg." It is well that the initial impetus behind Watts's composition be remembered.

Watts was a Protestant and a Puritan. He believed in justification by faith, and not by works. In support of this doctrine he tried metrical paraphrases of Romans iii 20-22, and of several other Pauline passages, and also wrote a poem sharply distinguishing the Law and the Gospel :

The Law commands and makes us know
What duties to our God we owe :
But 'tis the Gospel must reveal
Where lies our strength to do his will.

The law discovers guilt and sin,
And shows how vile our hearts have been ;
Only the Gospel can express
Forgiving love and cleansing grace.

(II 121.)

It will already have been obvious that Watts knew and loved the Bible, and that he regarded all he wrote as but a supplement to it. If we allow him the title "theologian," then he must certainly be called a "scriptural or biblical theologian." Much of his writing was but the putting of Scripture into verse. This is true not only of the 150 pieces which make up the first book of *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, and of the 300 pieces in his *Psalms of David*. It is true, also, of many of the poems in the second book of the *Hymns*. Moreover, several of his Communion hymns are really metrical paraphrases of the New Testament passages relating to the Supper. Watts, indeed, in his verses rarely went far beyond the words of Scripture. A little poem entitled "The Holy Scripture" (I 53), based upon a catena of passages from

both Old and New Testaments, is not among his happiest efforts, and was perhaps one of his earliest. The following is much more effective and significant :

Laden with guilt, and full of fears
I fly to Thee, my Lord ;
And not a glimpse of hope appears
But in Thy written word.

The welcome of my Father's grace
Does all my grief assuage :
Here I behold my Saviour's face
Almost in every page. . . .

This is the judge that ends the strife,
Where wit and reason fail ;
My guide to everlasting life
Thro' all this gloomy vale.

(II 119.)

There are other occasional references which indicate Watts's attachment to Scripture. It is, however, important to note that it is Scripture as presenting certain "doctrines" (I 53), in which he is interested. Here we touch one of the nerves of our subject. Our eighteenth-century forefathers were not all cover-to-cover literalists or fundamentalists, as is sometimes supposed. Watts would have been puzzled, I think, by this phenomenon of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He and his contemporaries treasured the Scriptures as conveying with divine authority a plan of salvation which, it seemed to them, was therein clearly set forth.

Mr Rupert Davies in *The Problem of Authority in the Continental Reformers* has lately shown how this is true of Luther's doctrine of the Bible. It is interesting to note to what passages of Scripture Watts turned for his early metrical paraphrases. What was his "canon within the canon"? A rough estimate of the contents of the first book of *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* shows that of the 150 pieces sixty are based on the Old Testament, and ninety on the New. Of those taken from the Old Testament nine come from the Psalms—a foreshadowing of the much more substantial task Watts was later to undertake—seven from the book of Job ; no fewer than twenty are based on passages from Isaiah and fourteen come from the Song of Songs. The range of passages is therefore very limited. The verses from the Song of Songs are placed together and clearly formed part of a single sequence. They were probably composed in imitation of John Mason (1645-94), who published not only *Spiritual Songs, or Songs of Praise to Almighty God upon Several Occasions* but also, *The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's, first turned then paraphrased into English Verse*. The Song of Songs is interpreted in terms of the relationship of Christ and the Church. Colligan tells us that Dr Kippis once expressed his pleasure that Philip Doddridge did not give as much attention to the Song of Songs as did Watts and that Job

Orton—another eighteenth-century worthy—complained of Watts's "luscious divinity."¹ It is to be noted that one of the hymns for which Watts has been most severely criticized occurs within this set of verses from the Song of Songs :

We are a garden wall'd around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground ;
A little spot inclosed by grace
Out of the world's wild wilderness.

(I 74.)

It is not always remembered, however, that a later stanza from the same piece begins

Make our best spices flow abroad.

But in spite of this, I question whether Mr Bernard Manning was right in speaking of evidence of a missionary spirit in the hymns of Watts.² He gives no references, and stanzas that might be cited (e.g. I 10, 28) are paraphrases and apparently intended to refer to apostolic times. Protestantism was not yet awake to its obligations to the heathen world. What is true is that Watts shrank from the Calvinist doctrine of Election, and that there are hints of universalism in both his poetry and his prose.

Of the ninety New Testament paraphrases thirty-one are from the Gospels, forty-one from the Pauline Epistles,³ and fifteen from the book of Revelation, but all save nine of the shortest of the New Testament books are represented. Here again, it is clearly a message of salvation which is being set forth, a system of saving truth to which Scripture bears witness.

This impression is confirmed when we turn to Watts's metrical Psalms, by no means the least impressive of his achievements. Watts thought of himself as doing something very different from merely putting the Hebrew Psalms or the Authorized Version into English four-lined verse. The full title makes this clear. *The Psalms of David imitated in the language of the New Testament and applied to the Christian State and Worship*. . . . "Watts redeemed the psalmody of the Congregationalists from Judaism, and made it Christian," said R. W. Dale. This is exactly what he set out to do. He felt that ancient Hebrew Psalms—whatever their intrinsic merit or historical interest—have little or no place in Christian worship. There our attention is to be on "God the Saviour"; things "Jewish and cloudy" may darken our sight of Him. And who will deny the justness of that description as applied to *The Psalter* in the form in which it is attached to *The Book of Common Prayer*, or as it appears in the Chant-section of Non-

¹ *Eighteenth-Century Nonconformity*, pp. 95 f.

² *Essays in Orthodox Dissent*, p. 194.

³ Including I 117, based on Romans ix 21-4, which K. L. Parry calls "a rare hymn" setting forth High Calvinism.

conformist hymnals, or as it is exhibited in the pages of the *International Critical Commentary*? But there are in *The Psalter* great riches of thought and expression; and all that lies in Scripture before Christ in a very real sense points forward to Him. Watts claimed and transformed this heritage, baptizing it into Christ. " 'Tis not a translation of David that I pretend," he wrote to Cotton Mather, "but an imitation of him, so nearly in Christian hymns that the Jewish Psalmist may plainly appear, and yet leave Judaism behind. . . ."

I do not think that Watts for a moment believed that all parts of Scripture could be adapted in this fashion, though he was deeply impressed by the way the Old Testament points forward and beyond itself, by that sense of a sentence begun and yet to be completed, to borrow Brunner's metaphor. There is a revealing couplet in the stanzas already quoted:

Here I behold my Saviour's face
Almost in every page.

(II 119.)

To put the matter shortly, Watts believed that man had been rescued from mortal peril by the intervention of the Son of God, and that only by faith in Him could man escape destruction. It is the great cosmic drama of man's redemption that occupies Watts's mind and draws out his praise and adoration. That is the theme which underlies all his songs and paraphrases. It is in terms of the mighty act of God in Christ that he interprets the Psalms. Stanzas from three hymns—one from each part of *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*—will give us the picture. It occurs again and again, its outline clear and unmistakeable.

When the Great Builder arch'd the skies
And form'd all nature with a word,
The joyful cherubs tun'd his praise
And every bending throne ador'd.

High in the midst of all the throng
Satan, a tall archangel, sat;
Amongst the morning-stars he sung,
Till sin destroy'd his heavenly state. . . .

And thus our two first parents stood,
Till sin defil'd the happy place.
They lost their garden and their God,
And ruin'd all their unborn race.

(II 24.)

Ere the blue heav'ns were stretch'd abroad
From everlasting was the Word;
With God he was, the Word was God
And must divinely be ador'd. . . .

Ere sin was born, or Satan fell
He led the host of morning stars;
(Thy generation who can tell,
Or count the number of thy years?)

But lo, he leaves those heav'nly forms;
The Word descends and dwells in clay,
That he may hold converse with worms,
Drest in such feeble flesh as they. . . .

Archangels leave their high abode
To learn new myst'ries here, and tell
The love of our descending God,
The glories of Immanuel.

(I 2.)

And then add to these two hymns the matchless stanzas which we can all supply from memory—"the most passionate product of his genius" as it has been called:

When I survey the wondrous Cross
Where the young prince of glory dy'd
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

(III 7.)

Taken by themselves those last verses might be used in support of a "subjective" or "moral influence" theory of the Atonement, but they cannot rightly be isolated from the setting of "Saving acts," *Heilsgeschichte*, on which Watts elsewhere insists.

It is the fact that Watts is constantly presenting aspects of this divine drama that Mr Bernard Manning no doubt had in mind when he said that Watts dealt with "the great elemental facts that always dominate the Christian's mind" (*Hymns of Watts and Wesley*, p. 100), "the great common themes of catholic Christianity" (p. 101), and when he remarked that he knew "no better introduction to classical theology than Watts" (p. 103).

Watts was born the year that Milton died. There is a Miltonic quality about Watts's thought. He put into four-lined verse what Milton had elaborated in his great epics. If one asks what aspects of the divine drama specially impressed Watts, the answer is: the majesty and sovereignty of God, which is again and again his theme, the insidious power of sin and the transitoriness of human life, the wonder of the person and work of Christ, the present comforts and the future joys of the believer. The hymn on "the death of a sinner" which begins:

My thoughts on awful subjects roll,
Damnation and the dead.

(II 2.)

has sometimes been adversely criticized, But it stands almost alone, though there is one set of verses devoted to "Hell" (II 44), and another on the "Last Judgment" (II 62), written in 1697. Occasionally, but only occasionally, Watts turns to the fate of the fallen angels; to this more often than to that of the impenitent sinner. Sometimes these stanzas contain striking images, as for example:

What deadly jav'lines nail'd their hearts
Fast to the racks of long despair

(II 27.)

Far more frequently Watts has in mind the joys of heaven.
There is an unfortunate couplet

Nor does the Turkish Paradise
Pretend to joys so well refin'd.

(II 131.)

but usually the subject lifts Watts above his ordinary level.
One of his finest compositions :

There is a land of pure delight
Where saints immortal reign.

(II 66, cf. II 33, 49.)

may have been written in 1706, with its imagery drawn from
the prospect of the Isle of Wight seen across Southampton
Water. The magnificent

Give me the wings of faith, to rise
Within the veil. . . .

(II 140.)

is one of the poems added to the second edition of *Hymns and
Spiritual Songs*.

By and large, although Watts's compositions were occasional
pieces, the balance is remarkably true, and there as the centre
of Watts's faith stands the divine-human figure, the God-man,
Christ Jesus. To the titles, offices, and work of the Saviour
Watts returns again and again.

Though he writes several times of the delights of worship
(II 14, 15, 64, 123), there is not a great deal in Watts about
the life of the Church. That may be partly accounted for
by the fact that his frequent illnesses made him far more of a
solitary, even as a young man, than might otherwise have
been the case. Some of the stanzas on "our frail bodies"
(e.g. II 19, 28), probably have a personal reference, and
should evoke sympathy, not derision. The hymns for the
Lord's Supper are significant, and it is noteworthy that
though the elements are spoken of once as "types," the
language in general is far more that of catholic piety than
either Zwinglian or Calvinist.

These provisions that we have
Can raise us from the dead.

(III 5.)

But the rich cordial that we taste
Gives life eternal to the dead.

(III 18.)

He speaks of "this immortal food" (III 17), and in almost
every one of the Communion hymns stresses the Supper as a
foretaste of heaven.

Baptism receives mention at least five times, thrice in the
paraphrases and twice in the second book. Watts attempted

a metrical version of Romans vi, but it was not very successful
(I 122). Another piece contains the verses :

Our souls he washes in his blood,
As water makes the body clean :
And the good Spirit from our God
Descends like purifying rain.

There we engage ourselves to Thee
And seal our cov'nant with the Lord ;
O may the great Eternal Three
In heaven our solemn vow record.

(I 52.)

which would be easier to apply to believer's baptism than to
that of infants. A later paraphrase, however, is headed
"Children devoted to God in baptism." Elsewhere Lydia
and the Philippian jailer are used as examples to Christian
parents, and another of Watts's couplets runs :

He seals to saints his glorious grace
And not forbids their infant-race.

(II 127.)

In preaching, baptism, and the Lord's Supper, as Watts
declares in another place, faith is assisted by sense (II 141) ;
but it is faith that is essential.

Probably the best commentary on Watts's hymns is
Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Human Soul*. It
is a book which Watts himself had once hoped to write.
When his ill-health prevented this, he gladly entrusted the
task to Philip Doddridge, revising the manuscript and
cordially approving the contents. In the *Rise and Progress*
there is the same scheme of salvation, the same general
attitude and emphasis.

The questions that remain are these. How far is the divine
drama as Milton, Watts, and Doddridge present it, not only
true to the Christianity of their own day and that of preceding
centuries, but also congruent with and essential to Christianity
itself. How far is the scheme still capable of acceptance?
Watts's doctrinal framework goes far behind Calvin. It is
similar to that presented in another medium in mediaeval wall-
paintings. In its essentials it was that taught by the Church
from the time of Justin and Irenaeus, that is, from the time
of the struggle with Gnosticism. I am, I confess, less sure
how far behind the anti-Gnostic fathers it is to be traced.
Did it belong to the mind of our Lord as that can be recovered
from the New Testament? Can its outlines be changed?
Are certain acts of God separable from the "myth" within
which they are contained? If so, which and how many?
"The great theologies are epics," said Forsyth wisely. Can
Watts's epic still be used effectively, or must a new one be
constructed? The scientific discoveries of the last few
centuries have, it seems to me, made the picture of the

universe on which the old scheme of salvation was based difficult to hold—at any rate in the sense in which Watts held it. But the discussion of these theological issues lies outside the scope of this paper.

Whatever answer is given to these queries, there is no question but that Isaac Watts was a great Christian believer, who rendered outstanding service to his day and generation, leaving half a dozen hymns at least which, perhaps because his scheme of salvation is not obtruded in them, continue to express the aspiration and adoration of those whose hope and faith are in Christ. William Carey, the great missionary pioneer, chose some words of Watts as his epitaph. They at least all of us would echo :

I would believe Thy promise, Lord,
O help my unbelief. . . .

A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall :
Be thou my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my All.

(II 90, cf. II 28.)

NOTES

ISAAC WATTS. In connexion with the bicentenary of the death of Isaac Watts, members will be interested to know that a new book, published last year in America, is to appear in this country if possible in time for the celebrations on 25th November. It is Paul Davis's *Isaac Watts*, and will be published at 7s. 6d. by the Independent Press, Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

The society proudly congratulates the Rev. Dr Elvet Lewis on becoming a Companion of Honour last July.

Members will observe that the pagination of this number of the *Bulletin* runs not from 1 to 16 but from 49 to 64. This is in response to the request of a number of readers that in future the volumes should be paged continuously. Those readers who wish to preserve their *Bulletins* are advised to re-page Nos. 2 and 3 of Vol. II from pages 17 to 48. In future the pagination will be continuous.

The second part of the editor's article on Dykes is unavoidably held over until January. If any are disappointed at this, we felt that many more would be disappointed at the failure of the articles on Watts and Parry to appear in 1948. This was bad editing and we apologize.

THE HYMN-TUNES OF SIR HUBERT PARRY

(1848-1918)

By KENNETH G. FINLAY

PARRY was not a prolific composer of hymn-tunes. It would seem that officially he was connected with hymnody only as a member of the committee in charge of the 1904 edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. Twelve tunes of his are in this book, and of these nine were written specially for it.

A few tunes by him had appeared in print before the advent of this collection, the earliest being an unnamed long-metre tune, which does duty in Barnby's *Hymnary* (1872) for three hymns.

RUSTINGTON, a particular favourite (in the sense that it is not a general favourite) first appeared in the *Westminster Abbey Hymn Book* in 1883. It is now well established as the superior tune for "Through the night of doubt and sorrow," in *A.M.* but elsewhere editors are showing a preference for the four-line setting by Martin Shaw.

Church Hymns (S.P.C.K., 1903), produces FRESHWATER, his fine setting of "Crossing the Bar"—as near a congregational tune for this hymn as we are likely to get. Other tunes by him in this book are JUBILATE ("For thee, O dear, dear country"), and NATURE ("I praised the earth in beauty seen," a hymn in the six 8's metre by Heber).

CASA GUIDI was composed for Mrs Browning's "Of all the thoughts of God that are" ("He giveth His beloved sleep"), doubtless at Stainer's request, for the Presbyterian *Church Hymnary* (1898). Like MARYLEBONE ("In age and feebleness extreme"—C. Wesley), written for Sir Frederick Bridge to use in the *Methodist Hymn Book* of 1904, it is a special setting which admirably suits the words written for, but is unlikely to fit any others.

Writing in *English Church Music* for July about the 1904 *A.M.* tunes, "L. J. B." points out that no two are in the same metre, and that only one is in a minor key. This one, INTERCESSOR, has been included in a number of hymnals, though set to words other than the Passiontide hymn¹ for which it was composed. Its frequent mating with "O brother man" is, the present writer feels, a tribute to its fine qualities as pure music rather than an affirmation of its complete suitability for Whittier's relatively cheerful words.

The other tunes written for this book are—

LUDNAM HILL ("All hail, adored Trinity")

LUX PERPETUA ("O Lord, to Whom the spirits live")

¹ O word of pity for our pardon pleading,
Breathed in the hour of loneliness and pain.

ADA GREENAWAY.

STORRINGTON ("Days and moments quickly flying")
 AMBERLEY ("The roseate hues of early dawn")
 INFANTUM LAUDES ("When, His salvation bringing")
 BOURNEMOUTH ("I was made a Christian")
 GAUDIUM CAELESTE ("There was joy in heav'n")
 PORTUS VOLUNTATIS ("Father, Whose creating hand")

In most of these the tune fits its words exclusively, and is, therefore, unlikely to survive in our hymn-books, once the hymn for which it was written has passed out of currency.

A reasonable test of a hymn-tune is the question "Did it retain its place in the next edition of the book a generation later?" No complete revision of *A.M.* has been published since 1904; but it will be found that the *Shortened Music Edition* of 1939¹ keeps four of the nine tunes specially composed for the 1904 book, viz. INTERCESSOR, AMBERLEY, INFANTUM LAUDES, and GAUDIUM CAELESTE. These, along with ANGERING (a common-metre tune), RUSTINGTON, and LAUDATE DOMINUM (an arranged extract from one of his anthems) are the tunes which now represent Parry in *A.M.* It ought to be added that of the hymns set by Parry in the 1904 book four have been omitted from the 1939 edition.

In addition to the tunes noted above the following may be mentioned—

CLINTON, a common-metre tune in E minor, appearing in the *Church Hymnal for the Christian Year* (Novello),

"God of all created things," included in a small collection of hymns and tunes by various writers, which Novello issued in connection with the coronation of Edward VII, and

PILGRIM BROTHERS, an adaptation by Sir Frederick Bridge, first used in the *Methodist Hymn Book* of 1904, for "Through the night of doubt and sorrow."

Grove's *Dictionary* (1928) lists one or two other publications, viz. "O Sylvan Prophet" (1910) and "Hush for amid our tears," a setting of a hymn for a memorial service by Mary Bradford Whiting (1918).

The famous choral song, "Jerusalem," first sung in 1916, has not taken long to find its way into hymnals of the highest importance. It is good to know that a genuine "organ" accompaniment has now been provided,² for by no means every organist is able to adapt satisfactorily the composer's rather "full-fisted" pianoforte accompaniment.

So far as the writer is aware, these would complete the tale of hymn-tunes by Parry, were it not for the fact that there has come into being a sort of posthumous hymn-tune which deserves a word or two. In 1906 Novello published, as a song, an excerpt from his oratorio *Judith* (1888), entitled "Ballad of Meshullemeth" ("Long since in Egypt's plenteous

land"). In 1924 the publishers set it to Whittier's "Dear Lord and Father of mankind," and it has since appeared in *Songs of Praise* (1931) as one of two tunes for this hymn. Assisted by the B.B.C. it has become decidedly popular. Though the music certainly is attractive, its employment surely indicates a rather defeatist attitude towards Whittier's hymn. One cannot say what Parry would have thought of the idea; but, had he been asked to compose a tune for "Dear Lord and Father," it is most unlikely that the result would have been anything like REPTON!

Technically Parry's tunes are outstanding. They are scholarly and free from all unhealthy sentimentality.

Occasionally the melodies give a slight impression of austerity by reason of the composer's economy of notes. Comparatively rarely do we find him indulging in "passing-notes" or other melodic decorations in his hymn-tunes. He is sparing even in his use of the "dotted" note. And it is noticeable that he very seldom employs triple time: not for him the flowing long- or common-metre tune with its three beats (and two syllables) in the bar! Yet the fact of his writing organ preludes based on ROCKINGHAM and MARTYRDOM surely indicates appreciation of this type of melody.

In his handling of the more hackneyed forms Parry sometimes seems less effective than when he has an unusual metre or a problem to tackle. The difficulty of the task seems to bring the best out of him, as can be seen by his settings of "There was joy in heav'n" and "Jerusalem."

Not every composer of his stature can resist the impulse to use an unexpected turn of melody or harmony—just the sort of thing to make the worshipper hesitate and wonder what is coming next. Parry's tunes with their moderate range, their sequential (or near-sequential) passages, their logical chord-progressions and their well-established key-relationships call for no more than a reasonable mental effort on the part of the man in the pew.

Which of his tunes are likely to survive? The writer would suggest:

(a) In hymnals generally—FRESHWATER, INTERCESSOR, REPTON (until someone provides a more "atmospherically" appropriate tune, which does not require repetition of the words, and which has a less extensive range of melody), JERUSALEM, and LAUDATE DOMINUM. It is difficult to understand how the melody of the last-named could remain hidden away in an anthem for over twenty years. There are sufficient hymns in its metre to ensure its inclusion in almost any hymn-book, and at the very least it can be regarded as a committee's second choice after HANOVER.¹

¹ It may be pointed out that the majority of these settings were not originally conceived as normal hymn-tunes.

¹ See *Bulletin*, Vol. I No. 7, April 1939.

² For the new edition of *A.M.*—EDITOR.

(b) In *Ancient and Modern* circles, where something of a Parry tradition may be assumed—INFANTUM LAUDES, ANG-MERING, RUSTINGTON, and possibly GAUDIUM CAELESTE.

Postscript. Through the courtesy of Canon Lowther Clarke, Chairman of the proprietors of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, it can now be stated that the new edition of this hymn-book (announced for 1950) will contain the following tunes by Parry—

ANGMERING, INFANTUM LAUDES, INTERCESSOR, JERUSALEM, LAUDE DOMINUM, NATURE, REPTON, and RUSTINGTON.

THE OXFORD CONFERENCE

By the Rev. L. H. BUNN

FOR the fifth time since its foundation in 1936 the Society has gone into conference, greatly to the advantage of those so fortunate as to be present. This year, from 12th to 15th July, we enjoyed the kind hospitality and pleasant surroundings of Mansfield College, Oxford, where our requirements had been most carefully anticipated. The attendance numbered about twenty, and gained especial distinction from the charming and gracious company of Dr and Mrs Elvet Lewis who were on their way to Buckingham Palace where the Doctor was to be admitted by the King as a Companion of Honour. The Society was glad of this opportunity to felicitate him. On Wednesday we were also honoured at the tea-table by a brief appearance of Dr Martin Shaw.

As 1948 sees the bicentenary (in November) of the death of Isaac Watts, it was fitting that this prince among hymn-writers should, as the editor remarked, be celebrated at our Conference in the grand style. The proceedings, therefore, began with a festival hymn-singing for which, by judicious advertising, the large and beautiful college Chapel was well filled with a congregation resolved upon the active appreciation of hymns. Mr Routley was at the organ, the singing being directed by Dr W. K. Stanton, known to our members as a broadcaster and for a characteristic article in this *Bulletin*, xxvii f., on "Hymns for Boys." The admirably printed service sheet contained ten of Watts's best hymns each with a tune, and by a happy inspiration variety was introduced with three of the Chorale Preludes by Sir Hubert Parry who was born exactly a hundred years ago. Thus the singing of ROCKINGHAM, MARTYRDOM, and CROFT'S 136TH was prefaced in each case by the appropriate prelude, played by Mr Eric English, organist of SS. Mary and John. Dr Stanton led us by a wise blending of congratulation and reproof; he also believed in hearing some verses sung unaccompanied, even of the rather difficult ELTHAM, a lovely eighteenth-century tune

scarcely found as yet beyond the 1904 revision of *A.M.* But perhaps our highest adventure was with the mainly unfamiliar tune MENDIP (*S.P.* 201) of which only the melody was printed; here we were invited to supply the parts, and the conductor seemed not displeased with our attempts. Certainly some of us will always associate the "Land of pure delight" with that very attractive tune. One measure of our success in holding a public hymn-singing was that several visitors were drawn to attend other meetings of the Conference; another was the subsequent decision that the Society's main scholarly interests should not preclude the periodic arrangement of similar conferences in populous centres to augment our membership and promote sympathetic criticism of our subject.

The forenoon of Tuesday was devoted to business, the Rev. Maurice Frost being elected as Mr Parry's Anglican colleague in the chairmanship, since Canon Briggs feels obliged to retire. In recognition of Canon Briggs's invaluable service to the Society, he was warmly accorded the dignity of vice-president, in distinguished company with Mr Gillman and Dr Millar Patrick; they have all richly merited the highest honour that we can shew them. The appointment of the Rev. Erik Routley as editor of the *Bulletin* in place of Dr Patrick was formally confirmed. It should not pass unnoticed that the Society thus completes an era, with the retirement of its first editor and of both of the original joint-chairmen. We feel sure that, having firmly sustained the Society through its perilous early years, they learn with satisfaction that it is now strong enough to take in hand the major task for which it was formed. There could be no better proof of their wise and able guidance. For the outstanding result of the morning's discussion was the resolution to produce "a revised, abridged, and supplemented edition of Julian's *Dictionary*."¹ A great many things have changed since this was projected just before the war, and much depends upon a further interview with the publishing house of John Murray. Meanwhile the chief editorial responsibility has been generously accepted by Canon C. S. Phillips, D.D., with the expert collaboration of Mr Frost, Mr Routley, and Canon Briggs; they will be assisted by Mr Stephen Freer and the Rev. L. H. Bunn. Steps were also taken to renew contact with the American Society.

During the afternoon several members visited the Oxford University Press; others explored colleges, indulging a mediaeval fancy with Merton Old Library or the Oriel tortoise. After tea we were fascinated by Dr Elvet Lewis telling how such translators as David Jones in the late eighteenth century

¹ Incidentally it was interesting to learn that the treasurer had received a subscription from a relative of the late James Mearns, Dr Julian's learned assistant, in gratitude for the appreciation of him which appeared in the *Bulletin* (Vol. I 35).

had popularized Watts's hymns in Welsh. There followed a mental tour of the colleges in their hymnological associations.

The editor's lecture on Tuesday evening was a triumph of learning and also, in view of an unfortunate distraction, of imperturbability. He traces the development of hymn-tunes from 1539 to 1748, from the Genevan psalters to the kind of tune available at Watts's death.

Wednesday forenoon we again devoted to business, especially concerning future conferences. Following the afternoon recess Canon Briggs spoke with accustomed ease and competence of "Editorial Alterations," and the discussion produced some observations and warnings about copyright. Then after dinner we listened to the Rev. Ernest A. Payne discoursing upon "The Theology of Isaac Watts" (see p. 49). His address was a worthy climax to our proceedings and members will be glad to see a great part of it printed in this issue.

The few who could stay until the end were rewarded on Thursday morning by hearing the editor's witty impromptu comments upon the forthcoming revised *A.M.* His knowledge of the existing book being comprehensive and exact, this rapid oral "review" of the new advance copy was most exhilarating.

It was in every way a memorable Conference, effective and friendly. But our last word must be of admiration for Mr Routley whose versatile abilities were so whole-heartedly devoted to its success.

DAVID EVANS, 1874-1948

(From Dr MILLAR PATRICK)

WE regret much to record the death of the distinguished Welsh composer and editor, David Evans, Mus.D., which took place suddenly just after he had conducted a great choir of 4000 voices. He was seventy-four years of age. As a composer, an adjudicator at the National Eisteddfod, as a leading conductor of great psalmody festivals, and as Professor of Music in the University of Wales, he rendered incomparable service to music in the Principality. In hymnody he had a quite notable record, as editor of the splendid collection of national tunes, *Moliant Cenedl*, and as musical editor of the revised edition of *The Church Hymnary*. Personally he was a man of much attractiveness, gracious and kindly in spirit, generous in judgment, and while firm in his own convictions, one of the easiest of men to work with. His tunes enrich many hymn-books. By all who knew him his memory will be cherished.