

THE SERVICE OF SONG

BY T. BINNEY.

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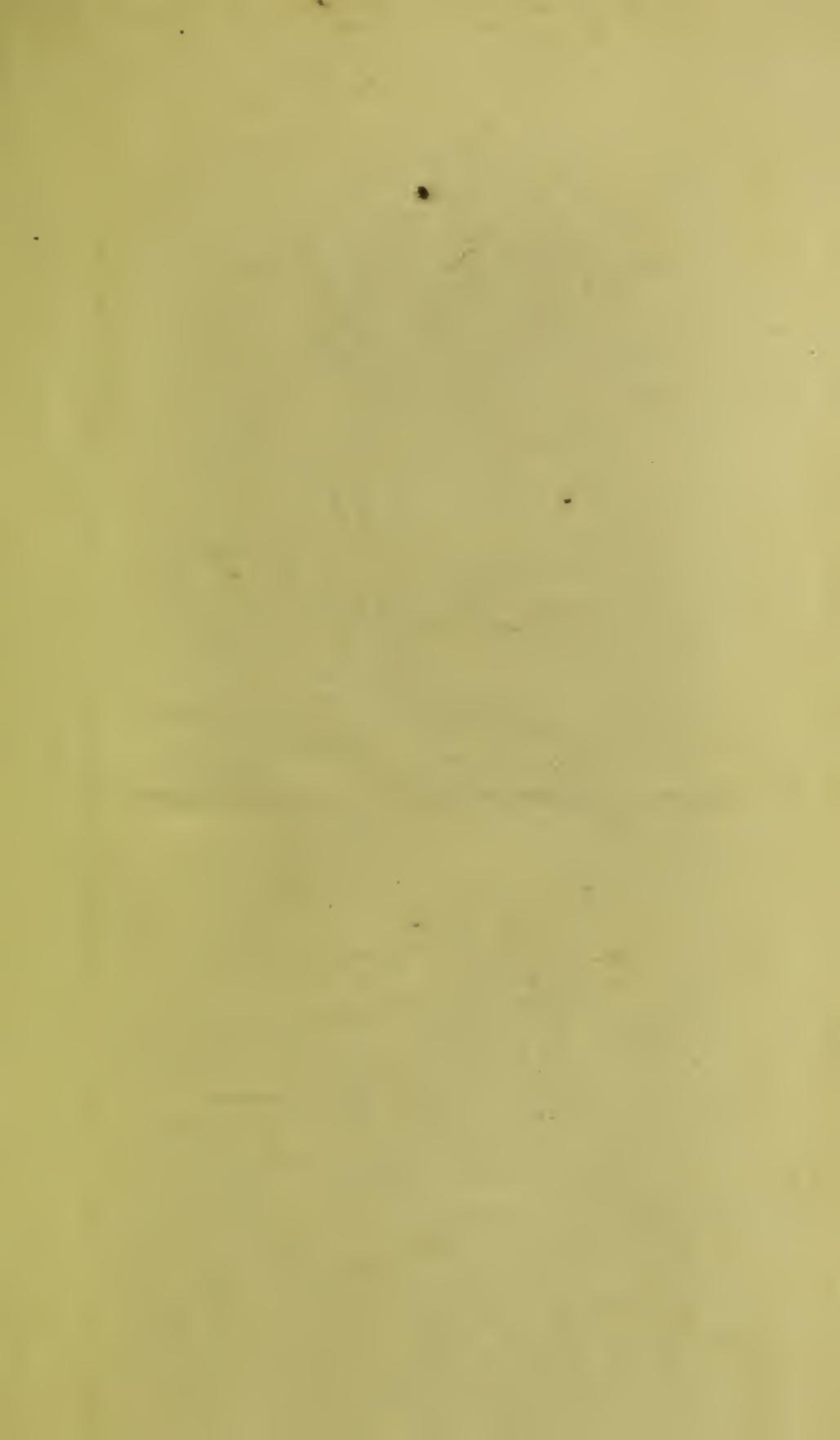
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THE SERVICE OF SONG.

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The Service of Song,



IN THE

House of the Lord;

BY

✓✓
THOMAS BINNEY.

—
FOURTH THOUSAND.
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P R E F A C E.

MY writing this book was very much of an accident. Wishing to encourage attendance on a proposed Course of Lectures on Psalmody, I preached a short sermon on the subject to my Congregation, with no view but that of exciting so much interest as might induce that attendance. To my surprise, I found there was a very general and strong desire for the publication of the discourse. I consented to prepare a brief and rapid "recollection" in the form of a penny tract. Having begun, I became increasingly interested in the subject; and it struck me, that by laying aside the form

of a sermon, introducing topics and allusions which the sermon does not permit, by collecting Bible facts, and giving Bible authorities, I might greatly interest thoughtful and intelligent young persons in the Scriptures themselves, and help them to discover that the Book, so often associated with ideas of dullness and gloom, is not only the most important in itself, but one of the most interesting in the world. With a view to this class of readers, here and there a little more pains than usual began to be bestowed on *expression*;—a flower or ornament was now and then thrown in, and something of measured and musical cadence occasionally given to the diction, that it might be a pleasing and an appropriate vehicle for the history of song. I am not so sure of my success as I am of my motive. I cannot but hope, however, that the goodness of the intention will palliate defect.

I may be permitted to observe, without presumption, that I think there is much to

interest in some of the things which come out in the course of the scriptural review, and that some of the points are important which are deduced from it, whether directly, or by explanation of the true analogy between Judaism and Christianity—the Temple and the Church. If the young persons of our religious families will employ themselves in finding out the Scriptural references to facts, persons, and expressions; and if parents, and elder brothers and sisters, will join them, and talk over *both text and comment*, I am not without hope that these few pages may be found, or made, by intelligent and loving piety, a pleasant and useful Sunday-evening Book.*

Three or four other sections were projected, but could not, I found, be introduced, without not only extending the piece beyond reason-

* A *Paragraph Bible* will be found of great advantage. I have just seen the three parts of a small, elegant, and cheap edition of one published by THE TRACT SOCIETY. It contains prefaces to the different books, remarks on the Hebrew Poetry, with much other matter that appears adapted to be very useful.

able limits, but so altering its character, as no longer to leave it that purely *Scriptural* history and exposition of Praise which I intended it to be. “The service of song in the house of the Lord,” from its true nature,—from that of which it must be the voice and the exponent, and from its intended uses, its abuse, and perversion,—connects itself with almost everything in theoretic and practical religion,—with dogmatic Theology, Church systems, the great Apostasy, the Protestant Reformation, Modern habits, hopes, apprehensions, &c. I had purposed adverting to several of these matters,—to have shown, how impossible it is to sing about some things, and how impossible, if some others be true, to sing at all; how *thought* and *work* are often both song and worship, and how the spirit of Christianity ennobles these; how the antiquities of primitive and Patristic times show the gradual corruption of Psalmody, till it changed its character, usurped rights, intercepted blessings and did mischief; how

the uses and power of it were often illustrated by the Reformers and their followers; how some churches, thinking the opposite of wrong to be right, (which it seldom or never is,) went to an extreme in rejecting and depreciating this service;—with some other kindred topics. It is not likely that I shall ever pursue these subjects now. I may have done something, however, by thus merely indicating them, to direct the thoughts and reading of some young but reflective reader;—and with this hope I part company, and, with a hearty God speed, wish him well on his way through the world before him. May “the *joy* of the Lord be his strength;” May “the statutes of the Lord be *his song* in the house of his pilgrimage!”

T. B.

Walworth.

THE ARGUMENT.

INTRODUCTION.—The true idea of Worship—Parallels between “Faith, Hope, and Charity,” and Preaching, Prayer, and Praise—Statement of the subject. I.—*Primitive and Patriarchal Times*. Paradise—Moses—Milton—Invention of Musical Instruments—Jubal—Connection between Poetry and Music—Music and Song in the Ark—Noah and his Sons—Laban and Jacob—Job—Elihu—Magnificent allusion to the Creation—Milton. II.—*Formative Ages of the Jewish Church*. Triumphant Song of the Israelites at the Red Sea—Their previous habits and culture in Egypt—Moses’ Song and Blessing—Balaam, Deborah and Barak—Daughter of Jephthah—Women of Israel—Hannah—Samuel—Prophetic Colleges—Music and Singing by the Sons of the Prophets—David’s playing before Saul—His Elegy on the Death of Saul and his Sons. III.—*The meridian period of the Jewish Church*. David’s removal of the Ark—His first Psalm—His regulations for the service of Song—Solomon—The Temple—Religious Revivals—The Captivity—The Return—The Jewish people, as a Nation and a Church, intensely Musical—Description of THE PSALMS—Concluding Sketch of the Life and Genius of

David. IV.—Passing glance at the Apocrypha—*The New Testament*—Christ's Advent hailed by the return to the Church of the Spirit of Prophetic Song—Mary—Elizabeth—Simeon—Anna—The Lord's Infancy and Youth—Illustrative passages in the Life, Appeals, and Parables of Jesus—Christ's entrance into Jerusalem—His attendance at the Temple—HIS LAST HYMN—The first Christians—Inspired Psalmody in the Apostolic Church—Permanent Laws respecting Psalmody—The Visions and Song of the Apocalypse. V.—*Concluding Lessons.* The importance of Praise—Its obligation as a Duty—Review of its History—Scriptural Exhortations—Necessity for Instruction in Singing—The subjects that may be embraced by Psalmody—Congregational and Family singing—The Levitical Economy—The Christian—Difference, from principle, between the Psalmody of the Temple and the Church—Limits of the elaborate and official in Christian public Praise—The conclusion of the whole matter *a great practical lesson*—TO BE GOOD.

THE SERVICE OF SONG,

IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD.¹

PRAYER and praise are the two principal parts of Divine worship; or, perhaps, more properly, the only exercises that *are* worship. Preaching is not worship. The preacher is not worshipping when he speaks, nor the hearers when they hear. More especially, "preaching the gospel," in the strict and proper acceptation of the phrase, is not worship; for this may be addressed, with perfect appropriateness, to an assembly of persons, not one of whom may be in a condition qualifying him to unite with the speaker, in any Christian act at all. The "glad tidings" might be announced, and "God's method of salvation" explained, to a company of Jews, Mahommedans, or idolaters; and they might be consistently occupied in listening to the message; and yet none of them, as such, or previous to their "belief of the truth," could, with any propriety, join, or be requested to join, in the prayers and hymns expressive of the faith and feeling of the

¹ 1 Chron. vi. 31.

Church. The same may be said, with some modification, but with perfect correctness as to *spirit* and *principle*, of any number of the immoral and godless among nominal Christians. Worship is an act, an utterance; it is possible, therefore, only to the living,—for it is the outward manifestation of an inward life—and is distinct, in its essence and nature, from the employment of the instrument which is used, by God's appointment, to enlighten the dark and quicken the dead.

The exposition of Scripture, the explanation and proof of Biblical doctrine, the illustration of privilege and promise, the inculcation of duty, with every thing else that can be done by a preacher to instruct and edify, comfort and warn, exhort and animate a Christian congregation, may approach nearer to the nature of worship, than what we have already described, and are always included in the meaning of the word, when we use it to express the whole of the exercises for which a church constantly assembles. Still, in strictness of speech, worship, properly so called, belongs exclusively to those services in which the assembly *unites*; which have a direct and immediate reference to God as the object; and which, as prayer or praise, are concerned with what he is,—with the blessings he bestows,—with their mode of bestowment,—and with all the sentiments and affections of the inner life.

The three exercises thus referred to, may, without either impropriety or irreverence, be spoken of in

the same manner in which the apostle speaks of the three great elements of the Christian life,—faith, hope, and love. “Now abideth preaching, prayer, and praise, but the greatest of these is praise.” “*Faith* cometh by *hearing*.” “Hearing” having produced its effect, “Angels rejoice over the sinner that repents,” and say to each other, with surprise and rapture, “behold he *prayeth* :” but their rapture is not perfected till the prostrate and penitent man, rising from the dust and ceasing from tears, “lifts up his face unto God,” “rejoicing in *hope* ;” saying, in the exuberance of his bliss, and in the exultant language of grateful *love*, “He hath inclined his ear unto me, and heard my cry ; he hath put a new song into my mouth, even *praise* unto my God.” “I will go into his tabernacle ; I will worship at his footstool ;”

“Angels that make the Church their care
 Shall witness my devotion there ;
 Shall hear the grateful notes I raise,
 Approve the song and join the praise.”

And this harmony with angelic natures, “in the house of the Lord” on earth,—this embodiment of holy love in the “service of song” there,—is but the prophetic anticipation of what is to come, and to continue for ever, in that world, where love and praise will be alike eternal. “Love never faileth, but whether there be prophecies they shall fail, whether there be tongues they shall cease, whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away.” In consistency with this, Preaching will be unnecessary,

where all are saved and none ignorant; "*they shall know even as they are known.*" Prayer will be superseded, where nothing is left to bewail or fear, deprecate or hope; "*There shall be no more curse.*" Praise alone, of the services of the church, "never faileth," nothing can supersede it,—it cannot die. The happy in heaven, cemented together by *that Love* which will survive the consummation of Faith and Hope, shall cease not, day nor night, the everlasting utterance of *that Praise*, which shall survive alike Preaching and Prayer; and in sympathy with them, will be the "many angels round about the throne," who, having once "searched into the sufferings of Christ," now seeing "the glories that follow," and hearing the harmonies of the new song, shall, as far as they are capable, "join the praise" and mingle their voices with those of the redeemed. *The inward sentiment* that binds together angels and men, and *the outward exercise* in which all unite, are thus ENDS, to which the other sentiments and the other exercises associated with them respectively here, are of the nature of *means*. The first belong to a permanent, the second to a passing and preparatory state. All that is formative and auxiliary must "vanish away,"—the essential and final can alone remain. Faith and Hope, Preaching and Prayer, will alike terminate; nothing will be eternal but Love and Song.

Poetry and music,—measured and modulated language, with measured and modulated sound,—would seem to be necessary to "the service of song

in the house of the Lord," or the union of many minds and of various voices in one united, harmonious and "reasonable service." Whether, had man not fallen, we should have had the invention of musical *instruments*, it seems idle to inquire, though difficult to doubt. Provision for music, vocal and instrumental, is made in the very constitution of things—in the mechanism of man and the laws of nature; and it is hardly to be supposed, that in any conceivable circumstances, especially those of moral and physical perfection, such provision would have for ever remained undiscovered and unapplied. Without discussing, however, such questions, let us proceed to collect and classify such passages in the Old and New Testaments as cast light on the history of praise, as a matter of fact, in the course and progress of the world as it *is*; only premising, that its aids and auxiliaries (if not, indeed, its necessary pre-requisites), poetry and music—the latter both vocal and instrumental—will constitute important points of observation. We shall not travel out of the record; we shall not refer to profane history, nor to the customs and accomplishments of other nations; but just taking the facts as they come before us, in the sacred books of the Jewish people and the Christian Church, we will observe what they appear positively to teach, or what they warrant us reasonably to infer.

The history of the Bible is capable of being divided in various ways, into distinct eras, according to the object intended to be illustrated; it will

serve our purpose to glance first over *the patriarchal ages*; then over what we may call *the formative period of the Jewish Commonwealth and Church*; and lastly, over *the times of their glory and decline*. We shall then pass on to *the New Testament*; and conclude with *general suggestions and remarks*.

I.

The patriarchal ages extend from the Creation to the giving of the law. A vast period, including the entire history of one world, with several centuries of the beginning of another. Their records are very imperfect, and, on many points, contain little to satisfy curiosity. The *history* of these ages is in the book of Genesis; their *literature*, so to speak, is the book of Job. This is all. The first contains a brief and rapid sketch of the antediluvians, with extended and admirable biographies of subsequent patriarchs; the latter is an elaborate argument on the Divine government and the doctrine of Providence; but neither of them includes any distinct or extended statements in relation to the times and exercises of worship. We can gather the general principles of the patriarchal creed; we know that there was animal sacrifice, and personal prayer; but *social* worship, and the observation of a Sabbath, are gathered by inference from brief and scanty materials, aided by general principles and analogies. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that there is nothing to be found in

these books, historical or preceptive, on the subject of Singing in Divine service, when there is nothing about public Divine service at all. We meet, however, with both music and poetry. The latter we find consecrated to religion, as the chosen vehicle of its highest utterances; and though the former is not directly associated with it, it cannot be shown that it was *not*, while all probabilities would favour the affirmative.

The voices of our first parents, in their state of moral innocence and of physical perfection, were no doubt of the greatest compass and sweetest tone. If not inspired, at the same moment, with the powers of speech, of poetry and song,—or with speech married at its birth with genius—ready, at any moment, on fitting occasion, to come forth in harmonious numbers or modulated tones,—the angelic symphonies they might sometimes hear would soon awaken their imitative powers, and reveal to them their rich and varied capabilities. Milton, indeed, in perfect keeping with the imagery of the Apocalypse, describes them as hearing from celestial natures, the music at once of voice and instruments; and, in consistency with all that is rational and probable, he invests them with the powers of extemporaneous poetical utterance, accompanied with corresponding musical expression. As night is coming on, and our first parents are surveying its splendours, Adam, in reply to an inquiry of Eve, is represented as thus referring to the first circumstance:—

“ How often from the steep
 Of echoing hill or thicket have we heard
 Celestial voices in the midnight air,
 Sole, or responsive to each other's note,
 Singing their great Creator. Oft in bands
 While they keep watch, or nightly rounding walk,
 With heavenly touch of instrumental sounds,
 In full harmonic number joined, their songs
 Divide the night, and lift our thoughts to heaven.”¹

And the following morning, the second circumstance is embodied in the lines introductory to their hymn of praise:—

“ Lowly they bowed, adoring, and began
 Their orisons, each morning duly paid
 In various style ; for neither various style
 Nor holy rapture wanted they to praise
 Their Maker, in fit strains pronounced or sung
 Unmeditated, such prompt eloquence
 Flowed from their lips in prose or numerous verse.”²

All this is not history, nor is it quoted as either argument or proof; although the fictions of the poet are often far more true than the *facts* of the historian. On the hypothesis of a primitive paradisaical condition of humanity, it would be difficult to show that the spirit and essence of the latter passage are unphilosophical. We pass on, however, to other matters.

The first mention of music in the Old Testament is in connection with the invention of instruments. “ *Jubal—he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ.*”³ Nothing is said of the spirit

¹ Paradise Lost, Book iv., line 680.

² Paradise Lost, Book v., line 144. ³ Gen. iv. 21.

that prompted this effort of ingenuity, or of the purposes to which its creations were devoted; but, originating as they did among the descendants of Cain, it may of course be supposed that their uses were rather secular than religious. The natural instrument, however, the human voice—the divinely constructed and endowed instrument, had preceded these in existence, and no doubt in exercise, and had suggested the idea of the mechanical imitation; but this was possessed by the posterity of Seth, who adhered to the primitive institutions of worship, as well as by those whose progenitor “went out from the presence of the Lord;” and by them it was probably employed, and perhaps under Divine teaching, when like Cain and Abel, “at the end of days,”¹ or, *at stated intervals*, they presented themselves at the place of sacrifice. *There* they might be heard, or in other, their daily or domestic worship, “Sole, or responsive to each other’s note, singing their great Creator.”

In respect to the invention of instruments by Jubal, it may be as well to notice, that it is grouped with the origin of the useful and imitative arts. One of his brothers was “an instructor of every artificer of brass and iron,”²—the great levers, especially the latter, on which the advancement and elevation of society depend. His father, Lamech, is the first person who is recorded as expressing

¹ Gen. iv. 3, “In process of time,” margin, “at the end of days.”

² Gen. iv. 22.

himself in poetical language ; his address to Adah and Zillah¹ is the oldest specimen of verse extant. The first Musician was appropriately the son of the first Poet. Poetry, at least, was early consecrated to the service of religion, for it became the language of inspiration and prophecy ; its sister art, as we have supposed, was very probably similarly sanctified. God, indeed, in speaking directly to Noah or Abraham, “ respecting things to come,” could adapt himself to the language of common life ; but Jacob, rising into a diviner region than ordinary existence, in declaring to his sons “ what should befall them in the last days,” is filled with an afflatus that elevates his spirit above itself, and only finds a fitting vehicle in poetical expression. In the same way, from earliest time—from the first moment that God had a worshipper on earth—when man rose into sympathy with the Divine and the Infinite, and attempted the language of adoration and praise, it is almost certain that, by instinctive, spontaneous and irrepressible force, it found appropriate embodiment in the “ service of song.”

“ *The father of all such* as handle the harp and organ.” The language implies that many, from the time of Jubal, through antediluvian and post-diluvian generations, to the time of the writer, cultivated the art. We have no ground for supposing that instruments were *re-invented*, as lost or forgotten things, after the flood. “ They that handled them” had no *second* father. They were preserved,

¹ Gen. iv. 23, 24.

therefore, by "the church in the ark;" some, if not all of its members, could cheer their long and dark sojourn, by striking from the strings of "Jubal's lyre" sparks of beauty, sweetness or splendour—the notes of some sacred and Divine song, expressive of their trust and confidence in God. The voices of that apparently abandoned "remnant," settled or sailing on that waste of waters, to the eye of sense perilously circumstanced, were, no doubt, often "lifted up on high," in joyous measure and exultant faith, while uniting in such vivid expressions of praise, as, ages afterwards, lingered and echoed "*in the house of the Lord.*" "GOD IS OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH, therefore will we not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. Though the waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."

In the time of the postdiluvian patriarchs, and among the descendants of Shem, the pious line of the posterity of Noah, we find music cultivated,—voice and instrument accompanying each other. The allusions bear, indeed, for the most part, on common life and social gladness, but they indicate the character of the times, which, in consistency with all experience, would display itself in religion as in other things. Laban, when reproving Jacob for his sudden flight, says, "Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me; and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away

with mirth, and *with songs, with tabret, and with harp?*"¹ And Job, describing the social customs of some of his day, says, respecting them, "*they take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ.*"² It is true that this occurs in a description of the wicked; but their wickedness did not consist in their love of music, but in their preferring gratification to godliness; in the state of mind that could allow them to rejoice, or to enjoy anything, while they were utterly unprepared for eternity, and might "in a moment go down to the grave."³ But Job was "a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil." What such a man enjoyed, therefore, however much the wicked may have enjoyed it too, could not of course have been a part of their wickedness. Now we learn from his own lips, that in the days of his prosperity, he had not been indifferent to musical satisfactions, for he complains of the change which, by his afflictions, had been brought upon him *in that respect*. "My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat. *My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep.*"⁴ Job, then, like others, once "rejoiced at the sound of the organ," and had, in fact, both "harp" and "organ" of his own. And that music was associated by him with delight and pleasantness, may be inferred from his saying, that in the time of his health and riches, his private

¹ Gen. xxxi. 27.

² Job, xxi. 12.

³ Job, xxi. 13.

⁴ Job, xxx. 31.

prosperity and public honour, he had been "*as a tabret*"¹ to them who now mocked at his misery. Elihu describes God as him "*who giveth songs in the night,*"² an expression which, while it refers to God giving *matter* for praise in the time of adversity, in intervals of pain or hours of wakefulness, implies also, that that *matter* was turned to account, and turned to account by vocal harmony. God gave the *matter* for songs, but the pious made the songs and sung them. We may close this stage of our inquiry by referring to the magnificent allusion which is contained among the first of the Divine statements, when the writer of the book of Job introduces Jehovah himself as taking a part in and closing the controversy. True, it is a figure of speech; it is God clothing his ideas in the language of men; but figures of speech, used to express spiritual or Divine ideas, must have their basis in objects or facts familiar to men, in order to their conveying any meaning at all. They, therefore, to whom it was said, that at the creation, "*the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy,*"³ must have been capable of estimating the allusion; they must have been acquainted with these modes of expressing exultation; they must have known something, not only of the rude, instinctive exclamation of a multitude, but of the union of numbers in harmonious concord. The quotation in question has not escaped (as what *did* escape?) the notice and use of that wonderful man,

¹ Job, xvii. 6. ² Job, xxxv. 10. ³ Job, xxxviii. 7.

who sung, in a manner approaching the inspired, whatever what was included in the adventurous "height" of his "great argument," and, among the rest,

"In the beginning how the heavens and earth
Rose out of Chaos."

After the completion of the work, the assent of the Creator is thus described, in harmony with the scriptural allusion before us.

"Desisting, though unwearied, he returned,
Up to the Heaven of Heavens his high abode,
Thence to behold this new created world,
The addition of his empire, how it showed
In prospect from his throne, how good, how fair,
Answering his great idea. Up he rode
Followed with acclamation and the sound
Symphonious of ten thousand harps that tuned
Angelic harmonies : the earth, the air
Resounded ;
The Heavens and all the constellations rung,
The planets in their station listening stood,
While the bright pomp ascended jubilant.
The harp, the solemn pipe,
And dulcimer, all organs of sweet stop,
All sounds on fret by string or golden wire
Tempered soft tunings, intermixed with voice
Choral or unison.
Creation and the six days' work they sung." ¹

II.

In advancing to the next period, *the formative ages of the Jewish Commonwealth and Church*, we

¹ Paradise Lost, Book vii. line 553, &c.

meet at the very commencement with one of the most sublime and magnificent scenes that was ever described by the pen of the historian, or ever imagined by the fancy of the poet.¹ Were it even supposed to be a gratuitous embellishment, the invention of the annalist, when his natural feelings, kindled by the contemplation of the deliverance of the people, and rising into rapture, he boldly accorded to them fitting utterance by the venturous imagination of this song and scene—even upon that hypothesis, the description we refer to would stand forth as one of the most wonderful creations of genius. A nation of slaves suddenly emancipated—a people, who a few days ago were trembling with terror, betraying the cowardice bred and fostered by their previous condition, now delivered from their pursuers by a miracle at once of mercy and of judgment—standing on the shores of the sea through which they had been led in safety, and into the depths of which their enemies had been betrayed and were now buried, having “sunk down to the bottom as a stone”—a million of voices joining together in a set composition, divided into parts, the men singing the descriptive stanzas, and the women, by themselves, at the end of each, coming in with their choral response, celebrating “Him who had triumphed gloriously”—why, the mere fabrication of such a thing is enough to entitle a man to immortal remembrance. When, however, we take it for what it is, the simple record of a

¹ Exodus xv.

fact—when we try to imagine the reality, and consider that it once actually *was*—that that multitude was seen by the sun in the heavens—that the wilderness and the shore echoed to the sound of their many voices,—and that, with jubilant emotion, and measured cadence, and pipe and timbrel, the redeemed of the Lord rejoiced in their deliverance, and offered to their Deliverer “this sacrifice of praise” and “service of song”—we feel ourselves the subject of thoughts and emotions which language is utterly inadequate to embody, and which naturally lead us to that period when a mightier multitude, “whom no man can number,” exulting in the bliss of a Diviner deliverance, are to stand upon the margin of a new world, and, looking on the extinction of all their enemies, to “sing the song of Moses and the Lamb.” We are concerned, however, at present, with *the event*, and not with any of its spiritual analogies; and, as such, as a matter of fact, it is manifestly full of interest and significancy. That Moses was inspired to compose the song, there can be no question; nor can there be any doubt that it was written *to be sung*. He would be divinely directed to give it to the people, and the entire arrangement for the sublime service would be thus sanctioned by the will of God, if it were not, indeed, the simple realization of a Divine idea. It is not wise or right, in any case, unnecessarily to multiply miracles; and, therefore, we suppose that the knowledge of music, the acquaintance with the principles and practice of the art requisite

to the correct performance of the song, together with the instruments used on the occasion, *were all brought by the people from Egypt*; their power to execute, their taste and skill, their appreciation of a piece that was certainly somewhat elaborate and complicated, with their ability to manage the timbrel and harp—all these were not things that suddenly dropped down on the Hebrews from heaven, and of which they had known nothing before. The song was made for a people who could sing it; and it was adapted, by its parts and structure, and mechanical accompaniments, to a people who were capable, by science and art, of singing it well; and it was a “service of song *unto the Lord* ;” poetry and music were here publicly sanctified to *Him*. The first great, national act, or rather, perhaps, the first deliberate *Church-exercise* of ancient Israel, was thus to dignify these sister arts. I cannot but think, however, that this act would not in itself be a new thing; it could only be the doing on a new scale,—in a manner unprecedented for publicity and numbers,—what they had been in the habit of doing before. From the whole, therefore, may be gathered many obvious inferences as to their previous condition; some that will help us in conceiving of their religious acts,—and some that will mitigate our ideas of their bondage. Whatever might be the mere social and secular character of *Laban’s* music, we cannot but feel that the posterity of Jacob were musical too, and *the probability is*, that it was used by *them* in the service of God; and,

whatever was the weight of their "bitter bondage," it was not, it would appear, so crushing, as to prevent their general cultivation of an art through which they might at once find utterance and solace for their sorrow. They had time to attend to it. They did attend to it. In the haste of their flight even,—with their hearts palpitating and absorbed with their hope of freedom,—they had thoughts to spare for their tabrets and timbrels; they brought them with them; they preserved them on their journey; they took care of them in passing through "the sea;" and hence, when brought to the farther side, they were fully prepared, by voice and hand, with responsive skill and choral harmonies, to sing their deliverance, and magnify the Lord.

It was most appropriate that a people so capable of "the service of song," and who had already been accustomed to connect it with their religion, should thus, as their first great and united act, "give to the Lord the glory due unto his name." It was a fitting exercise too, for those, who, with greater exactness than before, were about to be formed into a *Church*, and to have a priesthood appointed, and sacrifices arranged, and a tabernacle built, and worship established distinguished by attributes of pomp and beauty. The laws of Moses, subsequently given, are mostly taken up with what was new — with ecclesiastical and political regulations suited to the changes then introduced, or to prospective and anticipated circumstances. The Aaronic and Levitical institutions, with all that

they involved, were new things, and are therefore elaborately described and ordered; but, in attending a sacrifice and uniting in worship, the people only did, in larger numbers, what they had been habitually doing before. Already were they able to obey the exhortations, "Praise the Lord with the harp, sing unto him with the psaltery. Sing unto him a new song; play *skilfully* with a loud noise."¹ For *them*, as to this matter, no teaching was required, nor any law necessary to be given. A command would have been needed *to have prevented it*,—to have revealed the novelty that "the service" in question was a forbidden thing. Their associations and habits may be gathered from their conduct on the setting up of the golden calf,—an act, it should be remembered, irregular only in the second degree. It was *constructive*, not direct or positive idolatry. They intended by it to honour Jehovah—to worship, through a visible symbol, the God "that had brought them out of the land of Egypt;" and hence, when Aaron "built the altar, and made proclamation," the proclamation was, "To-morrow is a feast unto the Lord." Whatever was wrong in this act of worship, *all* could not be wrong, especially *that circumstance*, which being distinguished at a distance, Moses perceived that they *were* worshipping,—“it is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome, but the noise of *them that sing* do I hear.”²

¹ Psalm xxxiii. 2, 3.

² Exodus xxxii. 4, 5, 6—18.

From the wanderings in the wilderness to the time of David, a period of great vicissitude and confusion, there are many expressions and facts to be met with, indicative of the connection of poetry and music with instruction, prophecy, worship and war,—war, remember, of such sort as to partake of the nature of a religious act. “The wars of the Lord,” were the expressions of piety as well as patriotism; were often begun by Divine direction, and ended by miraculous interference; were always, perhaps, hallowed by the presence of a priest, and sometimes attended by the visible symbol of that of God. The songs that celebrated victory, and occasionally lamented defeat, were compositions generally suggested by inspiration, while those who united in them did so as in an act of national worship, and with all the feelings and sentiments of worshippers. Poetry, music, instruction and prophecy, are all combined in the sublime “*Song*,”¹ which was taught the people, as one of the last acts of their Lawgiver; and in “*the blessing, wherewith Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death.*”² There is something striking and interesting in the fact, that the commencement and the close of the utterances of the Hebrew prophet in the wilderness, were in the form of elaborate lyrical compositions;—the one on entering, the other on emerging from the Desert;—*that* after crossing the Red Sea, this before dismissing the people over Jordan. The apostate “that loved the wages of

¹ Deut. xxxii.

² Deut. xxxiii.

unrighteousness," was obliged, against his will, to obey the impulses of the Divine Spirit of prophetic song, and to depict his visions in the style and imagery of his better days.¹ One of the brightest periods in the otherwise degenerate age of the Judges, is that which is illustrated by the triumphant song of Barak and Deborah. The prophetess whose supernatural sagacity had directed the war, and the military chief whose inspired valour found after victory expression in words, as it had previously done in achievement, united together in what is as much a Divine hymn, as a national anthem. They celebrated not their own virtues,—of the one the wisdom, of the other the prowess,—but they "*praised the Lord* for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves." They sang responsively. Some passages were uttered by the prophetess, some by the soldier, while others united and blended the voices of both.

"Awake, awake Deborah;

Awake, awake, utter a song.

Arise, [arise] Barak;

And lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam."²

The prayer of Hannah³ is a sacred, triumphant song, in which she expresses her gratitude for the honour of maternity, exults in her deliverance from domestic persecution, and embodies perhaps matters deeper than she knew. Divinely assisted, her pious

¹ Numbers xxiii. and xxiv.

² Judges v. ³ 1 Samuel ii. 1.

heart might have previously prepared it for her worship at Shiloh, or it might have been graciously "given to her" at the time; in the latter case, the "gift of utterance" would be accompanied by an act of impression on the memory. Very often, in her distant home, when thinking of "the little one" she had "lent to the Lord," would her heart be cheered and her faith strengthened, as she mentally revolved the exultant thoughts, or recited or sung the living lines. When old enough to appreciate the treasure, it would be imparted to Samuel with a full account of its associated events, by whom all was at length recorded and secured. From a fact or two in the history of Samuel himself, we learn much of the connection between "the service of song" and the prophetic institution. "Prophecy," in fact, in one of its senses, signified not the foretelling of future events, but *worshipping God with musical accompaniments and in elevated verse*. The schools of the prophets were places, where, among other things, and as one of the most important, their scholars were instructed for this service; and it sometimes happened that other individuals were supernaturally constrained to unite in the exercise. "Thou shalt come," said Samuel to Saul, "to the hill of God. Thou shalt meet a company of prophets, coming down from the high place *with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp*, before them; *and they shall prophesy*: and the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned

into another man.”¹ The event accorded with the prediction. At a subsequent period, Saul was again subdued by the same influence, when Samuel himself presided over the service. “When they saw the company of the prophets *prophesying*, and Samuel *standing as appointed over them*, the Spirit of God was upon [Saul and] his messengers, and they also prophesied.”² There can be no question, that we have here the picture of a service usual in itself, though protracted, perhaps, at this time,—a service, common to the inmates of a prophetic college, “a principal part of whose occupation consisted,—under the guidance of some Prophet, of superior authority and more peculiarly under the Divine influence, as Moderator and preceptor,—*in celebrating the praises of Almighty God in hymns and poetry, with choral chaunts, accompanied by stringed instruments and pipes.*”³

It is affecting to think of the daughter of Jephthah, with her light step, and in filial gladness, utterly unconscious of the fatal vow, coming out with “timbrel and dance,”⁴ to welcome her father from his successful war. It is not unlikely, if the lightest aspect of her doom be assumed, that “the daughters of Israel,” in their annual “lament” with the devoted virgin, soothed her disappointment and celebrated her “sacrifice” by plaintive songs.⁵ The women of Judea were mostly proficient in the art of music, and could greet their Defenders by

¹ 1 Sam. x. 5, &c. ² 1 Sam. xix. 20, &c.

³ Lowth’s Lectures, 18th. ⁴ Judges xi. 34. ⁵ Judges xi. 40.

lip and lyre. It was thus, in a body, that they met and welcomed the youthful conquerer of the giant-defamer of the God of Israel.¹ Though the jealous king, whom they also met "*with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music,*" was "wroth" and "displeased," by their ascribing to David superior numbers—the time came when the "stripling" achieved a generous revenge. He, whose genius could command all themes,—who was alike equal to subjects of magnificence, sweetness, or passion,—the scenery of the earth, or the splendour of the stars,—friendship or love, peace or war,—the vicissitudes of the heart, the workings of the conscience, the life of faith, the majesty of God and the vanity of man,—the elation and pride, the griefs and calamities incident to greatness,—he, on the occasion of the death of his enemy, forgot, for a while, the hopes and advantages it brought to himself,—punished the flatterers that thought to please him with news of the event,—and poured forth his sorrow over Saul and his sons, in elegiac stanzas, which "he commanded to be taught to the children of Judah," and to be sung in memory of the fallen monarch, especially calling on "*the daughters of Israel*" to wail and lament the "mighty" dead.

"The beauty of Israel is slain upon the high places:
 How are the mighty fallen!
 From the blood of the slain,
 From the fat of the mighty,
 The bow of Jonathan turned not back,
 And the sword of Saul returned not empty.

¹ 1 Sam. xviii. 7, 8.

Saul and Jonathan !

Lovely and pleasant in their lives,
And in their death not divided.

Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
Who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights,
Who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

How are the mighty fallen
And the weapons of war perished !”¹

In this manner, in accordance with the spirit of those rude ages, when physical attributes were the distinguishing virtues of heroic men, did the poet-chief embalm the memory of his vanquished adversary. He had done him before, however, better service. When his soul was darkened by melancholy and remorse, and by the consciousness of being abandoned by God—nothing within him of pleasant memory or cheering hope—his reason eclipsed by “an evil spirit” permitted of heaven to distract and torment his moral nature—then, music from the harp of the rustic minstrel had, for a season, soothed the anguish and softened the ferocity of the doomed man. Nothing more illustrates the power of Melody, its possible or actual medicinal virtues, than this scriptural instance of its successful use. It stands recorded on the sacred page, without any appearance of myth or allegory. It is a plain statement of an historical event, and must be taken to mean simply what it says. It is not improbable that many things were resorted to before the potent remedy was suggested. The sup-

¹ 2 Sam. i.

position of the poet, in the following lines, may not, therefore, be entirely unreal:—

“All cures were tried : Philosophy talked long
 Of lofty reason’s self-controlling power :
He frowned but spake not :—Friendship’s silver tongue
 Poured mild persuasion on his calmer hour :
He wept—alas ! it was a bootless shower,
As ever slaked the desert :—Priests would call
 On heaven for aid : *but then his brow would lower*
With treble gloom.” “Peace ! Heaven is good to all ;—
 To all,” he sighed, “but one : *God hears no prayer for*
Saul.”

“AT LENGTH ONE SPAKE OF MUSIC—”¹

“*And it came to pass*, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand : so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.”²

However we may account for it, such is the fact. The influence exerted included, probably, both hand and voice—music united to immortal words ; or if not, the strains, we may be sure, would be such as suggested tranquillizing ideas. They would be sacred melodies,—or they would belong to loving and gentle thoughts. The first utterances of a true poet are always pure. The harp of David never was otherwise. But at this period it had learnt none of the rougher jars which sorrow and sin taught it afterwards. Its dulcet notes would be as serene and tender as the pure conscience and the peaceful breast of the minstrel-youth, who had lived free from the corruptions of the world, in happy converse and communion with God.

¹ Hankinson’s Poems.

² 1 Sam. xvi. 14—23.

III.

We now advance to the culminating point of the ancient Church, when "the Service of Song in the House of the Lord," *was arranged and perfected by David and Solomon; and to succeeding times distinguished by periods of its decline or revival.* It will be impossible, however, to quote fully our authorities here; we must be content to refer to them, and to leave them to be personally consulted and examined.

The settled condition of the Hebrew worship dates from the arrival of the Ark in Jerusalem. It was not till then, 400 years after it had crossed the Jordan, that it found its fixed and fitting place. We have two accounts of the bringing up of the sacred symbol.¹ The one in Chronicles is the most full, and is followed by particulars of which we have no statement in the previous record. It had two removes; the first, from Kirjathjearim to the house of Obed-Edom, the Gittite; and the second, from thence to the city of David. Both were distinguished by "the service of song;" but the second was far more imposing than the first. It shows the neglect into which things had fallen, and the low state of knowledge in the nation, that neither David nor the priests remembered the law for the removal of the Ark, till they discovered their mistake by a judicial infliction.² Even, however, on the first occasion, the King and "all Israel played

¹ In 2 Sam. vi., and 1 Chron. xiii. ² 1 Chron. xv. 13.

before God with all their might, *and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets.*"¹ But on the second occasion, after three months' study of the law, meditation, prayer and prophetic aid, that they might discharge the duty "according to the manner," the arrangements were projected on a higher scale. "David gathered together all Israel, and assembled of the children of Aaron and the Levites," eight hundred and sixty-two.² And he "spake to the chief of the Levites *to appoint their brethren to be the singers* with instruments of music, psalteries, and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy." And they appointed, accordingly, classes of Levites for the different instruments, whose names are recorded. "Chenaniah, the chief, *was for song:—he instructed about the song because he was skilful.*"³ And "thus all Israel brought up the ark with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps."⁴ And, "*on that day David first delivered a psalm* to thank the Lord, into the hand of Asaph and his brethren."⁵ *A day to be remembered to all time!* Then, "the sweet singer of Israel," first gave the suggestions of his inspiration and the product of his pen, to embody and guide the praises of the Church. What effects have followed that first hymn! What streams of praise,—what clouds of incense, have

¹ 1 Chron. xiii. 8. ² 1 Chron. xv. 3, 4. ³ 1 Chron. xv. 22.

⁴ 1 Chron. xv. 28. ⁵ 1 Chron. xvi. 7.

gushed and risen, and are rising and gushing, the world over, at this moment, from the immortal impulse of that Divine act!

David, being disappointed in his desire to build "a house for the Lord," was permitted to arrange and classify the priests and Levites, for the more efficient discharge of their sacred functions. We have only to do with those who were appointed for conducting *the Psalmody*. Of these, there were four thousand.¹ There were two hundred and eighty-eight principal singers, in twenty-four courses of twelve each; each course had its head or leader; and all, probably, were under the superintendence of some few individuals of distinguished gifts, genius and skill, such as Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun. Some of the women of the Levitical families were included in these classes.² The spirit of prophecy, in the highest degree, sometimes fell on the female sex; they were not unworthy, therefore, of publicly uniting in its *secondary* exercise. That worship, and especially *official praise*, was this, has already been intimated; and the sentiment is confirmed by the account given of the arrangements of David. "He separated to the service" those "*who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals,*" "to give thanks and to praise the Lord."³ "These are they whom he *set over* THE SERVICE OF SONG, IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD, after that the Ark had rest. *And they*

¹ 1 Chron. xxiii. 5. ² 1 Chron. xxv. 5, to the end.

³ 1 Chron. xxv. 1, 3.

ministered before the dwelling-place of the tabernacle of the congregation *with singing*, until Solomon had built the house of the Lord in Jerusalem: *and they waited in their office according to their order.*"¹

That this numerous establishment, with all its instrumental pomp and performance, was not the mere result either of personal taste or of official expediency, is manifest from its being attributed to Divine suggestion. As the Levites were a permanent, large and increasing class, it might, to human sagacity, appear a wise and politic procedure, when the Ark had found a settled rest, for David to "invent his instruments of music," and thus to furnish a becoming employment for numbers who might otherwise have had little to do. But this is not the Scriptural account of the matter. It was a new era in the condition of the Church,—it was the eve of an illustrious age, in which, through the pomp and splendour of the temple, "*the first covenant*" was to express *the utmost of its typical significance*. It is not to be supposed that this would be left to the manipulation and meddlings of a human hand, whether moved from within by poetry or politics. He who had seen "the breach upon Uzzah," would hardly have dared to do what he did, unless he had felt that he was only perfecting the development of what already existed, or that he was guided in his additions by Divine authority. He had, we believe, both these grounds and reasons

¹ 1 Chron. vi. 32.

of procedure. It was David *the prophet*, much more than David *the king*, that arranged and ordered the temple service. "The spirit of the Lord spake by him,"¹ and in that character he had authority to touch sacred things. "Heman," also, one of the chief singers, is said to have been "the king's seer in the words, or matters, of God,"² which, though connected with the duties of his ordinary office, is an expression suggestive of deeper meaning. They who were appointed to play on trumpets, cymbals, &c., are described as "those that should make a sound *with musical instruments of God.*"³ And, to crown all, it is expressly affirmed, that "the Levites, set in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, psalteries and harps, *according to the commandment of David,*" were also thus set, "*according to the commandment of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet; for so was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets.*"⁴

From this period we find frequent mention of this part of the Divine service, and have some striking instances of its immediate connection with Divine manifestations. The person and prayer of Solomon, and the descent of the fire on the sacrifice, occupy so prominent a place in the dedication of the Temple, that we overlook the fact, that the *first* utterances of that day were *praise*; and that the first gush of the Divine glory streamed forth *as the first notes of the "service of song" rose up and reached*

¹ 2 Sam. xxiii. 2. ² 1 Chron. xxv. 5. ³ 1 Chron. xvi. 42.

⁴ 2 Chron. xxix. 25.

the ear of God! The fact is noticed with peculiar emphasis. “*It came to pass* that as the Levites, *who were singers*, having cymbals, psalteries, and harps, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord,—*it came even to pass, that WHEN they lifted up their voice*, with the cymbals and instruments of music, *that THEN* the house was filled with a cloud. THE GLORY OF THE LORD FILLED THE HOUSE.”¹ *This*, properly speaking, was the consecration of the edifice. The prayer of the king and the descent of the fire, with “the glory that followed” were subsequent to it! “*While they were speaking* (in song), God answered; and *before they called* (in prayer), He heard.” At all times of the Reformation and revival of religion afterwards, notice is taken of the Temple Psalmody. The historian is profuse in describing the care with which Hezekiah restored and cherished it, and how it animated the zeal and gladness of the worshippers.² Under Josiah it was much the same.³ In the times of Jehoshaphat we have a singularly interesting account of the connection of singing with deliverance in war. A great multitude, marching against Judea, terrifies its inhabitants. A fast is instituted. The king, the nobles, priests and people, congregate in and about the Temple, and prostrate themselves in sackcloth and tears. An encouraging prophetic message is announced, through the Spirit of the Lord descending on *one of the*

¹ 2 Chron. v. 11—14. ² 2 Chron. xxix, 25, 31; xxx. 21.

³ 2 Chron. xxxv. 15.

“*sons of Asaph.*” Immediately the aspect of things alters. The congregation falls down in grateful worship: the Levites stand up to praise the Lord with a loud voice. Mourning is changed to laughter, and sadness into song. The next day, when they are to go forth to battle, the king “consults with the people, *and appoints singers*, that should praise the beauty of Holiness, as they went out before the army.” “And it came to pass that *WHEN they began to sing and to praise*, the Lord set ambushments against the enemy, and they were smitten.” The victory was complete. The spoil immense. The people assembled on the field, and *sang together their thanks to God*. The locality got a new name from the circumstance. “Therefore the place was called the Valley of Berachah”—of Blessing, or Praise. “*And the people returned to Jerusalem with psalteries, and harps, and joy.*”¹

The prophets, in foretelling the captivity and describing the future desolations of the land, indicate the depth of that desolation by many circumstances, and among the rest, by the “ceasing” from song of voice and instruments. Facts realize the prediction. “The songs of Zion” are heard no more, “in the beautiful house where the fathers worshipped.” “Her ways mourn,” for none “go up with pipe to her solemn feasts.” “The young men cease from their music.”² “The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth.”³ But deliverance from captivity,

¹ 2 Chron. xx. ² Lamentations v. 14. ³ Is. xxiv. 8.

and return home, and settlement, and revival, and restoration there, are all associated with similar language, and embodied in corresponding facts. The people are "to go forth of Babylon with the voice of singing."¹ They are "to return and to come to Zion with songs."² Wherever they pass, as the Lord leads them "it shall be with tabrets and harps."³ The watchmen at Jerusalem, hearing of their approach, "shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing."⁴ City and Temple are to rise from their ruins,—vineyards and villages to reverberate with song.

"Again I will build thee;
And thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel."⁵

"Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept,
And gladness of heart as when one goeth with a pipe
To come into the mountain of the Lord, to the Mighty One of Israel."⁶

"Thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets,
And shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry."⁷

In conformity with all this, "when the Lord turned the captivity of Zion, the people were like men that dreamed. Their mouth was filled with laughter and their tongue with singing."⁸ "By the rivers of Babylon they had sat down and wept, yea they had wept when they remembered Zion."⁹ And they had "hung their harps upon the willows," for they could not sing "the Lord's song in a

¹ Is. xlviii. 20. ² Is. xxxv. 10. ³ Is. xxx. 32.

⁴ Is. lii. 8. ⁵ Jer. xxxi. 4. ⁶ Is. xxx. 29. ⁷ Jer. xxxi. 4.

⁸ Ps. cxxvi.

⁹ Ps. cxxxvii.

strange land.”¹ But now their joy was immense and irrepressible: it rose and flowed like “streams in the south.”² As they went on their way, the heathen were amazed, and said to one another, “The Lord hath done great things for them;”³ they heard the testimony, and confirmed the truth, and shouted aloud, “The Lord HATH done great things for us, whereof we are glad.”⁴ “O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of thy praise.”⁵ “The singers went before, and the players on instruments followed after; among them were the damsels playing with timbrels.”⁶ “They had gone weeping, they returned with songs.”⁷ And when they beheld but “the dust” and ashes that remained⁸ of her who had so long “sat solitary,”⁹ though there were many tears there was much gladness;—and they cried out, “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion;”¹⁰ “Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.”¹¹ “His foundation is in the holy mountains.”¹² “He shall count, when he writeth up the people, this and that man was born in her.” “As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there.”¹³ And they *were* there. They were exempted from *toll*¹⁴ and from molestation on their journey; they had *por-*

¹ Ps. cxxxvii.^{2 3 4} Ps. cxxvi.⁵ Ps. lxxviii. 7, and Hab. iii. 3.⁶ Ps. lxxviii. 25.⁷ Ps. cxxvi. 6.⁸ Ps. cii. 14.⁹ Lam. i. 1.¹⁰ Ps. xlviii. 2.^{11 12 13} Ps. lxxxvii.¹⁴ Ezra vii. 24.

tions¹ daily provided on their return and restoration. "And *at the dedication of the wall*, the sons of the singers gathered themselves together; and they kept the dedication with gladness, with thanksgiving, and with singing; with cymbals, psalteries, and harps."² And *when the temple was begun*, "The sons of Asaph sang together by course, in praising and giving thanks; and all the people shouted with a great shout, because the foundation of the house was laid."³ "God had brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, he had broken the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron."⁴ He had brought them to "his holy hill," and had given them to hope that they should again see his majestic "goings"—the stately steppings of God their King "in the sanctuary."⁵ "Fear was upon the nations round about."⁶ The Land had rest. No enemy "peeped, or muttered, or moved the wing."⁷ Where "mirth had ceased," the people "again sang as in the days of their youth."⁸ "The pastures were clothed with flocks; the valleys also were covered over with corn: they shouted for joy, they also sang."⁹ "The year was crowned with goodness."¹⁰ The reaper was glad "in the plentiful field;" and in the vineyards "they trode the grapes with songs."¹¹ So the Lord "redeemed Jacob, and

¹ Neh. xi. 23, and xii. 47.

² Ezra xii. 27, 28.

³ Ezra iii. 10, 11. ⁴ Ps. cvii. 14, 16. ⁵ Pa. lxxviii. 24.

⁶ Ps. cvi. 38, and 2 Chron. xvii. 10. ⁷ Is. x. 14.

⁸ Hos. ii. 11, 15. ⁹ ¹⁰ Ps. lxxv. 13, 11.

¹¹ Isaiah xvi. 10, and Judges ix. 27, (margin.)

ransomed him from the enemy, and rebuilt Zion, and adorned her again with her tabrets," "and he glorified the house of his glory and made the place of his feet glorious;" and in Judah, and in all the cities thereof, there were husbandmen and them that went forth with flocks; and the people came and "sang in the height of Zion, and they flowed together to the goodness of the Lord; and their soul was as a watered garden; and the Virgin rejoiced in the dance,—yea, young men and old together, for their mourning was turned into joy, and sorrow was exchanged for songs."¹

These prophetic and historical particulars indicate the genius of the Hebrew race, and illustrate the character of their national worship. As a people and as a Church the Jews would seem to have been intensely musical. They sang in public at their daily sacrifice, their Sabbath solemnities and periodical feasts. They sang in private at their social entertainments; families when surrounding the Passover-table—all ages and both sexes sang. When from the villages and towns of Judea "the tribes ascended to the house of the Lord," the "ways"² resounded with voice and instrument; every resting-place added to their numbers, and additional numbers were additions to the strength

¹ Jer. xxxi. 11, 12, 4, 13, and Isaiah lx. 7, 13.

² Isaiah xxx. 29, and Lam. i. 4.

NOTE.—Two or three of the passages quoted above are taken from *previous* periods of the Jewish history, but are applicable, in spirit, to the times described.

and melody of their song. Farmers and courtiers enjoyed the delight; ¹ youths and maidens, reapers and vinedressers, alike sang. Prophets of the Lord asked "for a minstrel," ² that music might fit the mind for the reception, and aid the utterance of Divine thought. The Sabbath to the Jews was a day of joy; they could dine together in large numbers, more especially to gladden the poor and the stranger, ³ when "the songs of the Lord" would enliven their refreshment and beautify His rest. Eminent individuals were commemorated in song. ⁴ The songs of Solomon were a thousand and five. ⁵ But how shall we describe those of the PSALMS? Than Solomon's fewer in number, but of higher inspiration and richer thought. As to their *form*, they include all varieties of lyric composition; they are of every character as to the nature of their subjects; and of all shades and colours of poetic feeling: but as to their *essence*, they are as a Light from heaven or an Oracle from the sanctuary:—they discover secrets, Divine and human;—they lay open the Holy of Holies of both God and man, for they reveal the hidden things belonging to both, as the life of the One is developed in the other. The Psalms are the depositories of the mysteries, the record of the struggles, the wailing when worsted, the pæans when triumphant, of that life. They are the thousand-voiced heart of the Church, uttering from within, from the secret depths and chambers

¹ 2 Sam. xix. 35, 37. ² 2 Kings iii. 15. ³ Luke xiv. 1, 13.

⁴ 2 Chron. xxxv. 25. ⁵ 1 Kings iv. 32.

of her being, her spiritual consciousness—all that she remembers, experiences, believes; suffers from sin and the flesh, fears from earth or hell, achieves by heavenly succour, and hopes from God and His Christ. They are for all time. They never can be outgrown. No Dispensation, while the world stands, and continues what it is, can ever raise us above the reach or the need of them. They describe every spiritual vicissitude, they speak to all classes of minds, they command every natural emotion. They are penitential, jubilant, adorative, deprecatory;—they are tender, mournful, joyous, majestic;—soft as the descent of dew; low as the whisper of love; loud as the voice of thunder; terrible as the Almightyness of God! The effect of some of them, in the temple service, must have been immense. Sung by numbers carefully “instructed,”¹ and accompanied by those who could play “skilfully;”² arranged in parts, for “courses”³ and individuals, who answered each other⁴ in alternate verse;—various voices, single or combined, being “lifted up,” sometimes in specific and *personal* expression, as the high service deepened and advanced,—priests, levites, the monarch, the multitude,⁵—there would be every variety of “pleasant movement,” and all the forms and forces of sound,—personal recitative; individual song; dual and semi-choral antiphonal response; burst and swell of voice and instruments; attenuated cadence; apostrophe

¹ 1 Chron. xxv. 7. ² Ps. xxxiii. 3. ³ Ezra iii. 11.

⁴ Isaiah vi. 3. ⁵ Ps. cxviii. throughout, and many others.

and repeat ; united, full, harmonious combinations. With such a service, and such psalms, it was natural that the Hebrews should love with enthusiasm, and learn with delight, their national anthems, songs, and melodies ; nor is it surprising that they were known among the Heathen as a people possessed of these treasures of verse, and devoted to their recitation by tongue and harp. Hence it was that their enemies required of them (whether in seriousness or derision it matters not) "*the words of a song,*" and said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion."¹

It is impossible to terminate this review of the ancient church, without a brief notice of "the sweet Psalmist of Israel," the most gifted and copious of its prophet-bards. There was often, we believe, a natural harmony between the personal qualities of individuals, and the work to which they were called of God. It was thus with Paul ; it was thus with David. His comely person and "fair countenance" indicated the harmoniously constituted dwelling-place of a soul endowed with clearness and melody, and fitted to become the favoured channel of heavenly thought. The shepherd boy was bold and brave, manly and magnanimous, and had in him, from the first, the slumbering elements of a hero and a king. His harp was the companion of his early prime. Its first inspirations were caught from the music of brooks and groves, as he lay on the verdant and breathing earth, was smiled

¹ Ps. cxxxvii. 3, (margin.)

on through the day by the bright sky, or watched at night by the glowing stars. Even then, probably, he had mysterious minglings of the Divine Spirit with the impulses of his own; was conscious of cogitations with which none could intermeddle, which would make him at times solitary among numbers, and which were the prelude and prophecy of his future greatness. He became a soldier before he was twenty. Ten years afterwards he was king by the suffrages of his own tribe. During most of the interval, his life was of a nature seriously to peril his habits and principles. He was obliged to use rude, lawless and uncongenial agents. He had to live precariously by gifts or spoil. "He was hunted like a partridge on the mountains." By day providing for sustenance or safety, and sleeping by night in cave or rock, field or forest. And yet this man,—in the heat of youth, with a brigand's reputation and a soldier's licence,—watched carefully his inner-self; learned from it as a pupil, and yet ruled it as a king,—and found for it congenial employment in the composition of some of the most striking of his psalms. When his companions in arms were carousing or asleep, he sat by his lamp in some still retreat, or "considered the heavens" as they spread above him, or meditated on the law, or engaged in prayer, or held intimate communion with God, and composed and wrote (though he thought not so) what shall sound in the church, and echo through the world, to all time! There is nothing more wonderful, in either sacred or profane

literature, than the combination of the circumstances and employment of David from his twenty-fifth to his thirtieth year. Even beyond that, his life was not tranquil. It is sad to think that his years of calm enjoyment were few, and that the cup of life, after being filled for him by God to overflowing, and made pure and sweet by previous suffering and self-restraint, should have been recklessly poisoned by his own hand. Till near forty he had to struggle hard for secular success. Even as a king, *twice* crowned, he had some about him that troubled his repose. But his worst enemy at length was himself. A short period of regal security bred indolence, luxury and lust. At forty-eight he tarnished the virtue of as many years, and, in one day, sowed the seeds of a rank harvest of blood and bitterness for his after-life. Certain of God's great gifts,—such, especially, as distinguished David, are often associated with such accessories as expose to more than ordinary peril. Inspiration itself, when it chose Genius as the channel of its song, did not alter the terms on which it had been conferred. Nothing can be an excuse or apology for sin,—yet, by God's mercy, it may be turned to account, and made to produce the opposite to itself. To some men's errors the world has been indebted for their richest lessons and ripest fruit. Worsted in battle, their wounds and bruises have festered and mortified, till, spreading into the flesh, *it* has become, to their better nature, as soil to seed. In the constitution of

things, a quick sensibility to physical impressions is often associated with a moral idealism, and with a living conscience of infinite memory and ceaseless voice; and when such persons are "alive unto God,"—have "tasted of his grace," and yet "tarnished their garments,"—their burning shame, bitter tears, prostrate humiliation, settled sorrow and slow hope, render them often the most memorable instructors. Natural impulses and spiritual neglect were associated in the sin, natural qualities and spiritual aids combined in the grief and re-conversion of the psalmist. To the lamentable lapse, the penitence and the punishment of David, we owe some of the most subduing, the most spiritually instructive and consolatory of his psalms—psalms that have taught Despair to trust, and have turned the heart of flint to a fountain of tears!

It is impossible to refer, however, to his compositions themselves; it must suffice to remark his own personal and enthusiastic delight in psalmody. He felt "praise" to be "comely and pleasant." His "psaltery and harp" were his "glory" and delight. *Every day* he praised God. "He shewed forth his loving kindness in the *morning*, and his faithfulness *every night*." *During* the night he would "rise and give thanks"—*in* the night "God's song was with him." "When old and grey headed" his harp and psaltery were still his joy—sources of pleasure and instruments of usefulness.¹ His "last

¹ Ps. lxxi.

words" were prompted by the Spirit of prophetic song. He was then permitted to lay claim to the highest inspiration, and to assume to himself the title by which he has been celebrated.¹ At length he fell asleep. Harp and lute, psaltery and psalm, were heard no more. "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, were ended." But he commenced with their close, and will continue for ever, "the service of song" in the upper world.

IV.

In proceeding from the Old Testament to the New, we may without impropriety cast, in passing, a hasty glance over that unknown, or at least unvisited region that lies between. The books of the *Apocrypha*, though not of inspired character or canonical authority, contain, mixed up with what is false, doubtful or ridiculous, much that is substantially correct as history;—something indicative of the progress of opinion in the Hebrew mind, in the interval between the prophets and the Saviour;—a great deal of admirable morality in the form of sayings of the wise, which display often consummate knowledge of life; with references to past events, and the record of contemporaneous incidents, which confirm and illustrate some of our suggestions. A specimen or two may interest. The Israelites are represented, *before leaving Egypt*, as practising

¹ 2 Sam. xxiii. 1, 2.

psalmody: "the righteous children of good men did sacrifice secretly; *the fathers singing out the songs of praise.*"¹ Thus, what we arrived at by reasoning as matter of probability,² is here stated as historic fact. In celebrating famous men among the fathers, we have a classification of this sort,—“Such as did bear rule and were renowned for power,—who gave counsel with understanding and declared prophecies,—such as were leaders of the people by their knowledge of learning, and were wise and eloquent in their instructions,—and *such as found out musical tunes, and recited verses in writing.*”³ In distinguishing individuals, it is beautifully said of David, that “in all his works he praised the Holy One most high, with words of glory, and *with his whole heart sung songs*, loving Him that made him; that he also set singers before the altar, *that by their voices they might make sweet melody, and daily sing praises in their songs*, that the temple might sound from morning.”⁴ In an apostrophe to Solomon, who is mourned over for “bringing himself to what stained his honour,” it is said, “*How wise wast thou in thy youth! thy name went far into the islands; thy countries marvelled at thee for thy songs!*”⁵ The condition of Judea during the captivity is touchingly described; “our sanctuary is laid waste, our altar broken down, our temple destroyed; *our psaltery is laid on the ground, our song is put to*

¹ Wisdom xviii. 9.

² See page 17.

³ Eccclus. xlv. 3, 5.

⁴ Eccclus. xlvii. 8, 9.

⁵ Eccclus. xlvii. 14–17.

silence, our rejoicing is at an end."¹ The commencement of the temple, after the restoration, is recorded in the same manner as we have already had it; but one or two subsequent events may, in conclusion, be referred to. The manner of the people's rejoicing after victory, and their tendering, in the act, *homage to God*, are illustrated in the book of Judith. "Then all the women of Israel put a garland of olive upon her, and she went in the dance; and all the men of Israel followed in their armour with garlands, and with songs in their mouths; and *Judith sang, and all the people sang after her a song of praise*: saying, sing unto God with timbrels, sing unto the Lord with cymbals, tune unto Him a new psalm."² On two occasions when the temple and altar had been profaned by the abominations of the Heathen, they were consecrated anew with harmonious rites: "*The singers sang praises, and with great variety of sound was there made sweet melody.*"³ "They kept the dedication of the altar, and offered burnt sacrifices with gladness; and look, at what time and what day the Heathen had profaned it, *even in that was it dedicated with songs and citherns, and harps and cymbals.*"⁴ But perhaps the most remarkable statements are some connected with events which took place about a hundred and sixty, and a hundred and forty years before Christ. In the one case, Simon the high priest, but a valiant man, delivering Jerusalem, is welcomed with hosannahs, entering it

¹ 2 Es. x. 21, 22.

² Judith xv. 12, 13, and xvi. 1, 2.

³ Ecclus. 1. 18.

⁴ 1 Mac. iv. 56, 54.

“with thanksgiving, and *branches of palm trees*, and with viols, and *hymns and songs.*”¹ And in the other, Judas Maccabeus, “the Lord guiding him,” having recovered the temple and city, “therefore *they bare branches, and fair boughs, and palms also, and sang psalms unto him* who had given them good success *in cleansing his place.*”²

On entering the New Testament, and taking the account of its facts chronologically, the first thing that strikes us as related to our present subject, is the revival of the prophetic spirit, and its employment of the ancient vehicle for its voice. When “the Lord again visits his people,” we have phenomena similar to what had existed before. Messages to man direct from heaven, as that of Gabriel to Zacharias, are made in the language of ordinary life; but when the soul is moved from within, by the impulses of the spirit, it finds its fitting embodiment in the higher form of poetic diction. Especially is this the case where the individual utters expressions of praise. The advent of Messiah, even before his birth, was thus welcomed with song. When the mother of the Baptist heard the salutation of the virgin, “she was filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake out with a loud voice;” and Mary replied in a sacred hymn, flowing from the same source, and probably accompanied with measured intonations:—

“My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour!”³

¹ 1 Mac. xiii. 51. ² 2 Mac. x. 1, 7. ³ Luke i. 41.

In the same manner, at the circumcision of John, when his father miraculously recovered his speech, he was "filled with the Holy Ghost," and his first accents were poetry and praise.

• Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
For he hath visited and redeemed his people,
And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us
In the house of his servant David.¹

And to this day these heaven-descended hymns, technically denominated *Benedictus* and *Magnificat*, regularly recur in the morning and evening services of large portions of the church. Whatever may be the errors, which render it a duty and a necessity to stand separate from those churches, it is impossible for us, if possessed of any depth of devotion or richness of sentiment, not to be affected by the idea of thus hailing, as it were, the spiritual coming of the Lord into his temple, in the very words which welcomed his appearance in the flesh—words prompted by the spirit of inspiration, and first flung from the lips, in sacred rapture, of the most favoured of men and women! As events advance they are successively accompanied with similar manifestations. The birth of the Redeemer is not only announced by angelic voices, but is celebrated by "a multitude of the heavenly host," in an anthem of praise.² When "brought by his parents to do for him after the custom of the law," that first infant visit to his father's house was not permitted to pass without some flashes of the old prophetic

¹ Luke i. 67.

² Luke ii. 13.

fire blazing forth to beautify his approach, and to honour the fulfilment and the subject of its song. "There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; he waited for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And he came by the spirit into the temple, and he took Him up in his arms and said,

' Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,
According to thy word;
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;
A light to lighten the Gentiles
And the glory of thy people Israel.'¹

"And Anna, a prophetess, coming in at that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."² Nor is it to be doubted that in that "company of kinsfolk and acquaintance," with whom, at twelve years of age, he went up to Jerusalem—in the course of their progress, and at their resting-places when they "sang in gladness of heart, going into the mountain of the Lord"—it is not to be doubted, that the spirit of Jesus was in happy unison with the hallowed "mirth," and that his youthful voice mingled in the melody.

During the life-time of the Lord we find but little bearing directly on our subject. An incident or two, slight in themselves, but still significant, indicate, however, the habits of the people, both secular and religious. They were accustomed, it seems, to have recourse to music in seasons alike of mirth and

¹ Luke ii. 25.

² Luke ii. 36—38.

mourning. The boys in their play copied their elders ; and in games of mimic joy and grief, imitated the engagements of riper age. " We have piped unto you and ye have not danced, we have mourned unto you and ye have not lamented."¹ The eye of the Saviour had rested on the scene ; he had heard the complaint of " the children in the market-place ;" and he drew from it an illustration, the most effective and felicitous, of the capricious character of the people of his time. On one occasion, going to visit the chamber of death, he was obstructed " by the minstrels making a noise," as they were engaged in their lament over the dead.² The pictures in his parables are in most of their circumstances copies of facts ; spiritual ideas are arrayed in the drapery of national customs and common life. The return of the prodigal to his rural home is appropriately attended by the usual demonstrations of rural rejoicing. " They began to be merry." " The elder brother was in the field, and as he came and drew nigh to the house he heard music and dancing." But the most striking circumstances, and those immediately connected with religious ideas and religious solemnities, associate themselves *personally* with Christ. When he entered the city, and entered it recognized by the people as " a prophet,"⁴ the multitude " *took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosannah ! blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name*

¹ Luke vii. 32. ² Matt. ix. 23. ³ Luke xv. 24, 25.

⁴ Matt. xxi. 11.

of the Lord."¹ "And at the descent of the Mount of Olives, they began *to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice*, saying, blessed be the king that cometh,—peace in heaven and glory in the highest."² "And Jesus entered into Jerusalem and into the temple," the people following him, and "*the children crying in the temple, Hosannah to the son of David.*"³ It was like a repetition of former scenes, in which patriotism and piety mingled the demonstrations of welcome to a deliverer and gratitude to God. But, four days afterwards, the scene changed and the end came. Morning by morning Jesus left the family at Bethany, and, walking over the Mount of Olives, "came early into the temple;"—at the hour, probably, of the morning sacrifice, in time to witness the sacred rite, and to join in its service of praise. "But on the first day of unleavened bread, when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve."⁴ They assembled to eat the Passover. Memorable were the incidents of that service; copious and wonderful the discourse of Jesus.⁵ They were never to meet again. The last moment at length arrived, and their intercourse on earth closed for ever! And it closed *thus*—"WHEN THEY HAD SUNG AN HYMN, they went out into the Mount of Olives."⁶ "The things concerning the Lord" hastened to their accomplishment. That night, the Levitical economy was

¹ John xii. 13. ² Luke xix. 37. ³ Mark xi. 11; Matt. xxi. 5.

⁴ Matt. xxvi. 17. ⁵ John xiii. xiv. xv., &c.

⁶ Matt. xxvi. 30.

virtually to expire. It did expire,—and it passed away in the expressive tones of the Saviour's voice, as he joined in one of its venerable hymns,—was aided, by it, to realize “the joy that was set before Him,”—and thus “went out” to the accomplishment of that redemptive act, which was to awaken and perpetuate the “New Song” of his own dispensation.

Judaism and Christianity overlap each other. The two “ages”—the old and the new, practically coexist and intermingle for a time. The Apostolic Church rises in Jerusalem, is composed of Jews, and worships in the temple;—it has special assemblies and services of its own, but it still adheres to the ancient ritual;—it looks on its rites, indeed, with new perceptions, and joins in its Hallelujahs with a new joy;—but it *does* join, sharing, with grateful and “gladsome mind,”

“Its matins duly and its even-song.”¹

The first Christians had treasures of verse already in their hands. The Lord had taught them the interpretation of “the things written in the Law, in the Prophets, and *in the psalms* concerning himself,”² so that in their attendance either at the Synagogue or in the Temple, they could feel and understand, in a higher sense, the Readings of the one, and the Psalmody of the other. In their more private meetings for teaching and worship, their praise would be expressed through their ancient

¹ Acts ii. 46; iii. 1. ² Luke xxiv. 44.

hymns, used with their new forms of thought, though uttered with their wonted modes of intonation. The Helenist and Proselyte in the Gentile Churches would be able in some degree to continue the use of the Hebrew hymns; but to many of the converts these would be as new as their new faith; and that faith itself would ask for forms of vocal utterance more fitted for its possessions, its certainty and its joy, than the superseded language of an imperfect, preparatory, and prophetic dispensation. We find, accordingly, that provision was made, among the other supernatural interpositions of the Spirit, for the *new* PSALMODY of the Christian Church. Nothing can more evince the importance of praise, and the honour with which God has honoured it, than this circumstance. The Divine gift, filling the heart and guiding the tongue of the Christian prophet, came forth in the form of “*a psalm*,” as well as of “*a doctrine*,” a tongue or an interpretation;¹ the individual “speaking by the Spirit,” spake “in song;”—and the rest of the Church, first edified by the official act, learnt, while it listened, the words and melody, joined in the exercise, and retained the gift for its own future congregational use. One account of the *Te Deum* is, that, “when Austin was baptized by Ambrose, while they were at the font, they sang this hymn by inspiration, as the Spirit gave them utterance, and so published it in the sight and audience of the people.” Now this story, which the learned reject

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 26.

as fabulous, is precisely what Paul teaches as having occurred in the primitive church. *It had Psalms and Psalmody direct from Heaven!* The apostle himself had all manner of gifts, and “spake with tongues” more than others, and, among the rest of his accomplishments, he spake in song: and he places the gift on a level with other spiritual exercises. “I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the understanding; *I will sing with the Spirit and I will sing with the understanding also!*”¹ As gifts were conferred “to profit withal,” he was anxious so to use this high faculty of teaching by Divinely inspired hymns, as best to promote the edification of others. That Psalmody may subserve the highest purposes,—that it is intimately connected with the grace of Christ and the work of the Spirit,—and that Christians should engage in it with delight and gladness,—appears from precepts which remain to the Church in the form of positive and permanent laws. “Be filled with the Spirit,—*speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*”² “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, *teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*”³ But this exercise, so sacred, might also be used as the expression of cheerful, exuberant feeling. “Is any afflicted, let him pray; *is any*

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

² Eph. v. 18, 19.

³ Col. iii. 16.

merry, let him sing!”¹ Paul and Silas, though in prison and in the stocks, had their souls filled with deep joy, which in this manner got appropriate expression. “*At midnight they sang praises unto God.*”² They sang words prompted at the moment,—or some remembered Christian psalm,—or a “*song of Zion,*” learnt in their youth, and rich, at once, in its new sense and old associations; and they sang, it is likely, as they had “*heard and seen*” in their former worship,—as was practised, probably, in “*the Churches of the Saints,*” and involved in the directions just recited—they sang “*responsively,*” “*speaking to themselves,*” and “*admonishing each other,*” by addresses and answers of encouragement and hope, and with blended expressions of Faith and Praise.

The last aspect which the scriptures present of “*the service of song,*” is the view given in the visions of the Apocalypse. The vail is withdrawn, and we are admitted for a moment to the upper world. The scenery is Jewish; but the spirit evangelical. The throne or mercy-seat, the sea of glass, the four-and-twenty elders arrayed in white, or priestly robes, with their crowns, and harps, and vials of incense; the many angels round about the throne, and the multitudes of beings in earth and heaven,—all this is but an enlarged idea of the temple service; the matter of their song, however, is the *Christian* sacrifice—the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, but now living and reigning

¹ James v. 13.

² Acts xvi. 25.

for ever and ever. The description of their service involves something of the responsive or accumulative character. One class commences the ascription ;— a larger continues, in more general terms, the expressions of praise ; a still larger, in all the outer courts of the universe, unites in a magnificent choral symphony ; then the service returns to its first leaders, and is brought by them to an appropriate termination.¹ The object of this vision is unquestionably, in the first place, to embody *truth*, —to exhibit, by emblems, the nature and results of the work of redemption, together with the love and adoration of the redeemed ; but it is not impossible that, while the scenery is taken from the Jewish temple, *the song* may be taken from those in use in the Christian church ; we may have in it a specimen of what had proceeded from the Spirit, through the gift of utterance ; this worship of heaven, may be but the echo of what, in substance, was, at that time, daily ascending from earth. This idea is the more probable, from the statement in Pliny's letter to Trajan, that what he had discovered of the Christians was, that they were in the habit of meeting before day, binding themselves with an oath to commit no wickedness, and “ singing, *responsively*, a sacred hymn to Christ as to God.”²

¹ Rev. chap. v.

² *** carmenque Christo, quasi Deo, dicere secum *invicem*.

V.

“The Book” has now passed in review before us. From every part of it something has been gathered bearing directly on “the service of song.” Incidentally, we have glanced at related topics, slightly noticing the poetry of the Hebrews, and illustrating generally their national character. Dismissing, however, now, every thing but the theme properly before us, PSALMODY, or sacred song,—the service of “*the house of the Lord*,”—let us notice some few of the more important of the subjects which the survey we have taken would seem to suggest, to illustrate, or confirm.

1. It is impossible but to be impressed, in the first place, with the importance which should be attached to Praise as an essential part of Divine service. Except by a small body of Christians, it is admitted, on all hands, that Psalmody, as a part of public worship, is proper and becoming. There is, by no means, however, what there ought to be of deep impression of its spiritual importance,—sense of its obligation as a duty,—recognition of its character as a sacred and Divine thing,—and of its specific distinction, as the peculiar privilege and high service of “the sons of God.” In some churches, it is the only exercise in which the people take a part. They are vocal and active only when they sing. Yet many of them habitually decline it. And this, not from want of ability,—for some of the

silent can sing well ; nor from conscious destitution or conscious forfeiture of the right to join,—for they believe themselves to be Christians,—to be “alive unto God,” unoppressed by deadly sin ; nor does it arise from any wound inflicted on their feelings by the accidents of the service,—for it may be conducted with skill and taste and devotional seriousness. The fault springs from want of thought ;—from inattention to, or ignorance of, the importance which God, in every age, has attached to praise ;—from a deficient sense of the duty itself, as duty ;—from a want of appreciation of the claims and dignity of worship, as such ;—from a low state of the spiritual life ;—from extreme or mistaken views of external religion :—or, in some worse cases, from spiritual pride, or secular,—both bad,—each, in its effect, making it to appear as if it was really thought by the individual, that a service in which *anybody might join*, was beneath the notice of one who could “thank God that he was not as other men,” in respect to the *riches* either of earth or heaven !

To whatever cause, however, the silence maintained by many Christians in the house of God is to be attributed, it is high time that it was broken. So far as Psalmody is neglected from inconsideration, it might serve to counteract that neglect, for the history of Praise, as recorded in the Scriptures, to be reviewed. Let it be remarked, how, from earliest time, the Spirit consecrated verse, and the pious delighted in song ;—how Jehovah was thus extolled and magnified by his people ;—how he

sanctioned the celebration, and inspired the expressions, of the service and psalmody of the ancient church;—how “praise waited for God in Zion,” and how he descended to receive her sacrifice, and to listen, delighted, to “the melody of her songs;”—how he honoured the sacred service by miracle, and employed it in national religious revivals;—how it brightened the return, and beautified the restoration of the captive Daughter of Judah;—how the Christian dispensation descended in song;—how Christ and his apostles sang;—how the first Christians were incessant in praise, its spirit within them irrepressible, jubilant;—how the Holy Spirit miraculously prompted and honoured Psalmody;—how Psalmody is a Divine and permanent ordinance;—how the church on earth is under it as a law;—how the church in heaven lives in it as her life! “Oh! that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.” “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name.” “I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth.” “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.” “Let us make a joyful noise.” “Serve the Lord with gladness; come before his presence with singing; enter his gates with praise; be thankful unto him, and speak good of his name.” “Awake up, my glory! Awake, lute and harp; I myself will awake early.” “It is a good thing to sing praises unto our God;”—sing, “for it is pleasant,—praise

is comely." "Alleluia! salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, be unto the Lord our God." "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the king of glory shall come in." 'Thou art the king of glory, O Christ!' "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests." "Salvation to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever:"—"power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

2. Psalmody, however simple, to be performed aright must be performed "*skilfully*." It has its principles and laws; it is a thing to be taught and learnt; to be cultivated and improved; to be enriched by knowledge, purified by taste, perfected by practice. For ordinary purposes, much, doubtless, can be done by the ear. Piety, too, will often furnish the heart with voice and tongue, and touch the lips with instinctive grace. But piety alone cannot do everything. It will be the better for instruction, where science can instruct it; and will lose nothing by labouring to excel, and "studying to show itself approved unto God." In the ministerial function, spiritual gifts are aided by common, secular culture,—they are developed and matured by profane learning and scholastic discipline. By exercise and habit, skill is gained and power got. "Gifts" can be "stirred up," polished, preserved.

Then, as fire, they blaze and burn; as armour, they glisten and pierce; as talents, they are kept and increased. "To him that hath, is given." Culture secures larger donations. The original capital is doubled by diligence. The same law holds everywhere, as to all persons and all things. It applies to the people as well as to the priest—to their obligations, and gifts, and duties, as well as his—and especially to such as include mental or mechanical instrumentality, as well as moral simplicity of purpose. It applies to SINGING. Of two Christians, or two congregations, *piety being equal*, he, or it, will be the first *in everything*,—in knowledge, action, teaching, *psalmody*,—whose piety is associated with intelligence and attention, carefulness and skill,—whose object it is, always to get the best conception of what is to be done, and of the best way of doing it, and then, by practice and painstaking, to do it well. When anything is to be accomplished for God or man, *he* will be the most approved by either, who seeks to do it, not only from a pure and proper motive, but in the best and most perfect manner.

When we thus speak of the importance of science and skill, it is not to be supposed that we intend to advocate that every individual is to learn to become an accomplished vocalist. There is much that may be recommended, and much done, without coming in sight either of this or of any other absurdity. Congregations might be assembled for instruction in some of the simplest rules, and for exercise in

the practice, of part-singing. The regular attendants at a place of worship might thus come together, and might learn to sing those parts for which they are fitted by nature, and to acquire, in some degree, the power of self-support, regulation and guidance. There is no more harm in using a tune-book than in using a hymn-book. Praise need not be broken or endangered, by "giving out the lines" supplanting the one, or by the guidance of the clerk being exclusively depended on instead of the other. It is quite possible for the mass of a congregation, in all senses, "to sing with the spirit, and to sing with the understanding also." We advocate no intricate measures, no complex, artificial combinations. The simplest melodies, plain, sound psalm-tunes, sung by a body of pious and instructed persons, with taste, feeling, and practical skill, would produce not only the richest musical effect, but, *through this*, would become, eminently and effectively, "means of grace,"—instruments of instructive and sanctifying impression. We want no "pipes or tabors, harps or cymbals," to make "sweet melody," if we can have this united product of head and heart,—this associated melody of sound and soul. There is nothing wrong in principle, indeed, in the use of an organ, employed with simplicity, as a mere substratum, guide and support, for the volume of voice rising from the people;—or for filling the place with *suggestive* intonations, with hallowed, soothing, preparatory utterances of penitential, grateful, adorative symphonies as the

congregation is assembling. There is nothing wrong in this. There is much that may be useful. But we do not want it. We neither advocate nor need the instrumental accompaniment, if the grand human and spiritual organ, composed of hundreds of minds and hearts, with its fulness of power, and niceties of modulation, and variety of pipes, and its conscious life, intelligence, and love, will only send forth what is in it,—“*skilfully*,” as a thing proceeding from “men,”—“*heartily*,” as a duty done unto God.

Some degree, however, of scientific instruction, and some attention to practice and exercise, are necessary to implant those principles of judgment, to develop that taste, and to give those powers of execution, requisite for the discharge, in the best manner, of this great duty. In former times, more generally perhaps than now, the ignorance of clerks, the vulgarity of singers, the shameless abandonment of this part of public worship by those of higher rank and trained intelligence, to the chapter of chances, as if *anything would do for it*; as if it was of no consequence, so long as *they* had their preaching, whether God had his praise,—that, while the one was to them as music, it was no matter if to Him the other was a mockery,—this led, by way of natural consequence, to many sad and painful results, some of which are amongst us still. Hence it was, and it could not but be, that the spirit presiding over and directing public psalmody was the prompter and patron not only of what was indiffe-

rent, but bad,—and not only of what was bad, but *worst*. Hence the identification of good singing with great noise,—all that was extravagant, vicious, vulgar, *fine*;—hence light, loud, irreverent tunes; the most absurd and unnecessary repeats, causing, sometimes, ridiculous or profane division of sentences;—the absence of all adaptation of the mode of singing to what was sung;—the most marked and monstrous inappropriateness between the tune and the hymn, the melody and the meaning;—and the actual non-perception of these things from ignorance and habit, or the faint dream of them only here and there. The mass of the people, nurtured and brought up in such an element, not knowing better from private advantages and culture, or public, “loved to have it so;” and, sympathizing with the singers as “the thundering legion,” delighted in their boisterous exhibitions, and enjoyed their rude effects. It is no use saying that bad singing may not have interfered with good people’s piety;—that while it was “pleasant” to their undiscerning senses, it may have been made “*profitable*” too, to their happy souls, by being blessed of God to such a result. Repulsive exhibitions of truth—forms of thought and modes of illustration, which might have bred disgust and driven away from the precincts of the church—have been *overruled* by Divine mercy for good; but we want, in God’s worship, *not* what he will *overrule* for the good of some, but what he will bless to the benefit of many, and accept as “the reasonable service” of all.

“The service of song in the house of the Lord” may include not only *direct praise*, to which some think hymns should be confined, but all the exercises and emotions of the heart. The varied vicissitudes of the inward life may find fitting expression here;—the works and ways of God—the wonders of his universe—the mysteries and felicities of his providential administration;—the great facts of our spiritual redemption;—the advent of the Lord—his life, and death;—the previous delineations of prophetic song;—the subsequent discoveries of apostolic light, revealing the invisible and foretelling the future;—all that faith realizes of the existent, all that hope desires and expects of the foretold;—these things, and such as these, may all find in the psalmody of the Church some forms of appropriate, united utterance. We are to sing, not merely *directly* to praise God, but to “edify” and “admonish,” impress and excite, each other and ourselves. Not merely *because* we feel, but that we *may* feel; not merely to present adoration, but to profess truth,—and so to profess it, that we may show we “glory” in it,—that “the word of Christ dwells in us richly,”—and that, by repeated and exultant avowal, its impression on ourselves, and its permanency among men, may be respectively deepened and secured. But here again it is obvious, that for all this to be done well, something is required to be done for the doers. To throw sentiment into suitable outward forms,—to embody the diversified voices of the heart in perfectly appro-

priate vocal expression ; and, when hymn and tune, psalm and song, are harmoniously matched, for a whole congregation to go through both in a manner in *all* respects becoming and effective,—for all this, there is required *musical* taste as well as devotional:—intelligence and tact, as well as piety, in him that presides, selects and leads ;—and instructed skill and developed perception—some sense of the ideal and the beautiful, in addition to the possession of religious feeling and true faith, in them that unite. It is quite possible for a large body of people to be raised, in respect to these things, to an elevation sufficiently high for all ordinary and practical purposes. With the rise of the mass, individual outrages may be expected to disappear. Some persons, whose piety is unquestionable, for want of that which *real* knowledge and intelligent culture would confer, offend against all decency and propriety by making themselves prominently heard above others. Let *them* be instructed, and let *others* be instructed,—and then, good sense with good taste being developed on the one side, and musical ability being acquired on the other, there would probably cease the motive and the temptation to the fault complained of. But besides attempting Congregational instruction, much might be done in other ways. Public praise, like public prayer, should be the fruit and confluence of all those feelings that have their source and support in the domestic and private exercises of piety. Singing may be an agent in infant training ; it may mould the soft, ductile spirit, and

bring it early into harmony with love and truth ; it may be a means of youthful impression and remembrance—an instrument of spiritual development in the course of “the nurture and admonition of the Lord ;” it may fill the nursery, the school-room, the house with a warm atmosphere of rosy light, and, as it rises up from happy hearts and young voices, may throw from its wings such golden dew-drops as shall nourish and strengthen, and draw forth into verdure and beauty, the seeds and buddings of early goodness. It may continue to be, to the members of a family, a daily agent in their spiritual advancement, steadfastness and joy. There may be singing with advantage at domestic devotion, where there are numbers and ability for the exercise. Many Christians are exceedingly culpable and great losers from the meagreness and deficiencies of their daily worship. I refer more particularly to those cases where skill and attainment in the members of the household, the result of elegant and expensive education, have conferred the power of accompanying, like David, daily service with daily song. Family worship should never be prolix, oppressive, wearisome. Tender age on the one side, uninformed minds, it may be, on the other, as well as all propriety, forbid this. But importance may be attached to it, and interest given, by diversified exercises, which shall make it appear short and delightful, though they may involve a necessity for extended time. “They do well,” says Matthew Henry, “that read ; better who read and pray ; but best of all

who read, pray, and sing too." "*It is a good thing thus to give thanks unto the Lord; to show forth his loving kindness in the morning, and his faithfulness every night.*" Let the voices of servants mingle and blend with those of the family; let all be encouraged to unite together—youth and age, authority and obedience—in glorifying the common "Father of all;"—let the recurring service of the domestic altar be thus truly that of the "Church in the house;"—we should have happier homes, kinder mistresses, better servants,—"brethren dwelling together in unity," daughters and sisters cementing and binding and beautifying the whole! We should have, too, the voices of those who can sing well,—to the pleasure and advantage of visitors and friends, when, in the social circle, they execute pieces of secular music, or the nobler works of sacred composers,—we should have their voices aiding "the service of song" *in the Sanctuary*; we should have this, naturally and becomingly, without either obtrusiveness or reluctance,—we should have it, as the happy result of their daily and delightful home-habits,—instead of now, as it too often is, their only singing when it is *not* God that is to be glorified in his worship, nor the Church that is to be enriched and assisted by their gifts.

3. The principle which distinguished the Levitical Economy from the Evangelical Dispensation,—the different character which the presence or absence of this principle imparts to *Psalmody*, and the practical

lesson which thence arises to the Christian Church, —are important to be known, observed and felt.

The Levitical Dispensation was typical and prophetic. It was intended to present, as embodied in a nation, a foreshadowing of that Divine idea, which was spiritually to be realized in the Christian Church. The whole people were taken into covenant relation to God, and he symbolically descended and “tabernacled” in the midst of them. The entire people were His. Theoretically, they were “a kingdom of priests.”¹ But, instead of taking them all for his immediate service, he took the first-born of each family;² and then, instead of the first-born, he selected and separated the tribe of Levi,³ the members of which were to be a sacred class, who were officially to perform all Divine exercises, *as the representatives of the nation*; thus, in its place, and on its behalf, they had “to execute the priest’s office,” and, while “waiting upon their ministry,” to discharge for all, the diversified duties of the holy function.

In connection with this official and representative priesthood, was a vast system of typical observances and symbolic rites, anticipating, pictorially, the sacrifice and offices of the Son of God, and the spiritual blessings to be enjoyed by his Church. The tabernacle, the vail, the annual atonement, the exclusion from the holy place of all but the High Priest, and his admission only once a year;—the solemn law, or “rigid interdiction,” that his admis-

¹ Ex. xix. 6.

² Ex. xxii. 29.

³ Deut. x. 8.

sion was to be “NOT *without blood* ;”—the constant repetition of the same sacrifices, with their ceremonial pardon, “purifying the flesh,” and their ritual admission to Divine service ;—all these things, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews informs us, illustrated the “better things” and the “better hope” of the Christian Dispensation ; and that *they did so, by God’s intention and purpose*, for it was *this* that “*The Holy Ghost signified*” by the institute.¹ Now, it further appears, that as the High Priest typified Christ, in his mediatorial character, passing through the veil of the visible heavens, and ministering for us before God,—so, the Priests and Levites, representatively acting for “the twelve tribes,” officially serving in their stead, embodied the idea of what the whole Hebrew people, “ceremonially,” *were*, and what the Christian Church, in all its parts, divisions and numbers, “spiritually” was *to be*. Hence, in the Jewish Church, “the service of song,” like all similar services, was representative, official, typical, vicarious : large numbers of a distinct and sacred *caste* were set apart to it ; it was surrounded with all possible pomp,—enriched with every variety of expression,—rendered with daily regularity,—and regarded as a delight to God and man. All this was done, *designedly to express* the Christian idea, of *the whole body of believers* being a “HOLY PRIESTHOOD,”²—“God’s clergy,”³ lot, or heritage,—“brought nigh to Him,” “having

¹ Heb. ix. 6—14, and x. 1—23.

² 1 Peter ii. 5.

³ 1 Peter v. 3.

boldness to enter," in spiritual reality and by personal faith, "even into the Holiest of all," there "to offer up daily sacrifices," "acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." What these "sacrifices" are—the *only sacrifices that can be offered now*,—and which are to be offered by *all* Christians—the *only priesthood that there is now in the Church*, may be thus stated. There is the presentation of "*the body*," or person, or entire nature, "as a living sacrifice;"¹ this is *the sacrifice of the heart*, the consecration of the mind and affections, the whole vital and active being, to God's will,—that, by acting constantly in accordance with it, there may be constantly rising up from the Christian man—from his inward and outward religious life—what shall seem like the ascent of fragrant incense towards heaven. Then, there is *the sacrifice of the hand*; benevolent activity; charitable help; obedience to all sorts of kind and generous impulses; unselfishness; Christians looking "benignantly on the things of others," and not only and everlastingly "on their own;"—"filling the hand" (a sacrificial phrase) with cheering, beneficent, and loving deeds; "*do good and communicate*, for with *such sacrifices* God is well pleased."² And, finally, there is *the sacrifice of the lip*, or, in other words, "THE SERVICE OF SONG:" the whole congregation assembling together in one place,—*all*, equally and alike God's priesthood,—every voice contributing its share, and every soul participating the privilege,—they, "with one con-

¹ Rom. xii. 1.

² Heb. xiii. 16.

sent," are to glorify God by "showing forth his most worthy praise." "*Therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise CONTINUALLY, that is, THE FRUIT OF OUR LIPS, GIVING THANKS TO HIS NAME.*"¹

The proper understanding of the principle we have affirmed, and of the sort of correspondence which it behoves us to look for between the Jewish and Christian Dispensations, is of vast importance, in relation to some points of speculative truth, and to some others of ecclesiastical order and ritual observance. Human priesthoods are no more. There is one "Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus,"²—and "there is none other but he." All true, spiritual Christians are priests, whose services are accepted through Him. There is no *class* of *Christian* priests. Sacerdotal duties and sacerdotal distinctions—Levitical orders and official religion have passed away. Ministers, bishops, elders, pastors, deacons, or by whatever name they may be known—*officers* for the government and instruction of the Church—there are; but as to *worship*, Man no longer acts for man; no human being comes in between God and his creatures,—transacting the concerns, and representing the persons, of one or many—the individual or the multitude. The clergyman or minister does not act *for* the people, but *with* them. In the Christian temple none are excluded from offering sacrifice. "*All have access, through one Spirit, unto the Father.*"³

¹ Heb. xiii. 15.

² Heb. iii. 1.

³ Eph. ii. 18, and Heb. x. 19—22.

The proper idea of the priestly, vicarious, official worship of the Jewish Church, finds, therefore, its realization, *not* in any similar sacerdotal orders of Christian Pontiff, priest and Levite, but first, in the exclusive, real High Priesthood of Christ, and then, in the universal participation of a *spiritual* priestly function by Christians. The result is, in relation to *Psalms*, that while, in the Jewish Church it was *official* and *representative*, it is to be in the Christian Church emphatically CONGREGATIONAL. All the faithful, without exception,—the entire mass of the Christian commonalty, equally with any official persons,—are possessed of the privilege, endowed with the right, and called to the duty, of celebrating “the service,” and swelling “the song.”

The official and splendid ceremonial of the Jewish service, in the discharge of which so many persons were constantly engaged, naturally admitted of the music of particular psalms having a *distinct* and *specific* character. Praise in the temple might, with propriety, be artificial and elaborate. A psalm might be divided into parts, arranged for various voices, each part have its appropriate musical expression, and individuals and companies might be trained and qualified for its effective performance. Each piece might be a shorter or longer anthem, with its solos, duets, quartets, choruses. The music thus fitted to a psalm would fit nothing else. The *Christian* congregational service is altogether another thing; and hence, the Christian psalm-

tune has to be adapted to another and different idea. It is for the use of "the whole body," the mass and the multitude, whose function it is vocally to worship, but who cannot, as a whole, be equal to the execution of elaborate compositions. The congregational tune must be a melody adapted to all the verses of the same hymn, and to all hymns of the same character; for thus only can the true Levitical idea be realized, and God's spiritual priesthood *all* unite in the harmonious public presentation of his praise.

Not that, in principle, everything approaching the elaborate in composition, or the official in character, needs to be excluded from Christian communities. If a society of "believers," to use a New Testament term, are so instructed and able that they can, as a church, competently execute the higher forms of musical composition, there is no principle to forbid them doing so,—either in companies, for their private, though social, solace and refreshment,—or, as a whole, in their public worship, and for their general edification. On the supposition or conditions expressed, such services would entirely accord with the *type* in the one Testament, and the *precept* in the other. The whole church would discharge the priestly function—the believers, as a body, by "spiritual songs," would be seeking to "edify" and "admonish" each other.¹ Or, to go still further, if some few individuals eminently endowed with musical power, and regarding

¹ Ephes. v. 19. Col. iii. 16.

that power as a spiritual gift to be employed for God,—just as the gift of utterance, in teaching or prayer, is a gift for the profit and advantage of the church,—if such were to employ *their* gift with the same object, *this sort* of official service might legitimately be justified, not by the model of the Levitical institute, but by that of the Apostolic Church. The natural endowments of mental vigour, argumentative skill, logical discrimination, eloquent speech, fertile fancy, with every other commanding attribute of power and person, *become spiritual* when adorning a soul spiritually alive ; and are acceptable alike to God and his people, when, in simplicity and sincerity, they are held in trust and devoted on the altar to the glory of the One and the good of the other. In the same way (*Paul being judge*), “he that hath a psalm,” as well as “he that hath a doctrine,” may have a gift to be held and exercised for God.¹ If such persons were occasionally to employ these powers, in a way which such persons only could,—properly regulated, the service might be one strictly religious, and prove a “means of grace” and “a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.” *Truth* would be given forth ; scriptural ideas and expressions illustrated ; new views imparted and explained ; deeper and diviner emotions realized ; and most blessed and permanent effects produced. There is no difference in principle, when exercised thus by Christian persons and with pure purpose, between the eloquence of song

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 26.

and the eloquence of speech. True, the one may be abused—but so may the other; both are alike liable to perversion, to be turned from their object, and to be employed as instruments of voluptuous religionism. Where preaching is disproportionately exalted—and especially when the preacher is like a strolling star, tempting benevolence with the promise of pleasure—the man is to many only “as one that hath a lovely song and a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument;”¹ alas! sometimes he is gradually so affected by bad influences, as to become, though perhaps unconsciously, as much a mere performer, as his hearers are the mere admirers of his song. The same thing of course might be done with the other gift. But if there be truth in New Testament teaching, it need not be so. It might be quite the contrary. If we were only *good enough*,—worthy of the blessing, and willing and able to use and improve it “as in God’s sight,”—it might do us no more harm than the “new song” does to the perfect in the upper world. Talents and tongues, prophecy and knowledge, were all abused to the mean object of personal display,—but they were not given for that; they were donations of the Redeemer for higher ends. It was not *inevitable* that they should be desecrated; nor is it so with the ability to sing, though both agent and auditor must ever remember that it, in common with all gifts, must be guided by serious principle in the exercise, to keep it from the perils that may

¹ Ez. xxxiii. 32.

follow its abuse. "Singing," as an instrument of spiritual impression, as a solace and a joy, is for the "edification" of the church; it is not an ordinance for converting the world. As the church becomes more pure, more spiritual—deeper and richer in feeling and experience—higher advanced in the Divine life—nearer to heaven in all its habits—reflecting the light, and at home in the atmosphere, of that world of ceaseless and endless song—song itself, in its higher forms, may be used by it through its gifted members, not only without injury, but with as much real and spiritual good, as was ever accomplished by any great sermon that was ever preached, or any "eloquent orator" that ever lived.

THE GREAT THING IS TO BE GOOD. It is the good that worship—the good that sing. "Praise is comely—for the upright." "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, who shall stand in his holy place?" Whose is the privilege "to draw nigh unto Him with psalms, and to come before his presence with singing?" "*He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness; in whose eyes a vile person is contemned, but who honoureth them that fear the Lord.*" This is "the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee; who seeketh, and who seeth thy face, O God of Jacob."¹ Here is the grand practical lesson from the present topic. To be

¹ Ps. xxxiii. 1; xv. 1, 2, 4; xxiv. 3—6.

religious, to have true faith, to be pure in heart and lip and life,—*this* is the preparation, the moral prerequisite, for “the service of song.” “To the pure, all things are pure.” To the holy in life, the spiritual in character, there might be found a blessing in all praise. Simple forms or elaborate services,—airs like the first tones of childhood, or anthems like the pealing thunder of the skies, might alike be used with simplicity and acceptance,—might descend upon the heart like the “dew of Hermon,” or brace it for moral battle and war. “The service of song” is not for the sinner *living in his sin*; it is not for the unbeliever, the ungodly, the unjust; the proud, the malignant, the selfish, the impure; it is not for the prodigal, while unconverted and far off; the hardened and impenitent, the fettered slave of the world and the flesh, “led captive by the devil at his will;”—all these, by contrition and tears, by faith in Christ and return to God, may pass through a process that shall capacitate and prepare them for the high service: but, sanctified affections and established holiness are the “robe and adorning” of God’s priesthood, for the regular discharge of their sacred function. The dead in sin, the sensual and corrupt,—“what have *they* to do” to speak God’s praise, any more than “to teach his statutes?”¹ The wickedest man may listen to preaching,—may be appealed to and addressed, that he may be warned or won;—but *some* movement of spiritual life, some spark of “grace in

¹ Ps. 1. 16.

the heart," is necessary to enable any man to sing—to sing as an act of acceptable worship. The sinner may be affected by the praises of the Church—"his heart may smite him,"¹ as he attempts to take its language on his lips,—so far "singing" may at times impress and arouse the conscience; but, *habitual wickedness* and *habitual song in the house of the Lord*, is a monstrous union, which, while persisted in, can only harden the human heart and provoke the Divine displeasure. "Will a man mock God?" It is terrible to think that there may be the appearance of this;—more terrible, perhaps, to know that it cannot be. "Be not deceived,—*God is not deceived.*"² The sinner may sing, but it cannot be mistaken for the spontaneous expression of loyalty and love. The idea is fearful of his celebrating perfections which he is for ever turning against himself: mercy, which may change to wrath; patience and forbearance, which he may possibly exhaust; rectitude, that may reject, an almightiness that may crush him;—that he honours in song a Saviour whose salvation he will not accept;—joins in services in which he can have no spiritual sympathy; anticipates, in words, the blessedness of a world he will never enter; and describes the approaching advent of a Judge, "who will destroy him with the brightness of his appearance, and blast him with the breath of his mouth."³ I would willingly have been spared this language. To utter

¹ 1 Sam. xxiv. 5.

² Gal. vi. 7.

³ 2 Thess. ii. 8, and i. 7—9.

it is "the *burden* of the Lord." It is entirely scriptural, however, in thought and phraseology, thus to speak. The sentences are simply terms and touches of New Testament truth. And they bear directly on our present theme;—for, far more terrible must be lip-service and lifeless song, amid the breathing splendour and in the spiritual services of the Christian church, than in the Jewish temple with its dim light, and dark shadows, and "carnal commandments."¹ Yet even then, to the formal and faithless worshipper, God's rebuke and complaint are piercing. "I hate, I despise your feast days; I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. *Take away from me the noise of your songs, for I will not hear the melody of your viols.*"² This language, and "what is like unto it," in the first chapter of Isaiah, is addressed, it is true, to *the very wicked*, who came in hypocrisy before God, and pretended to honour him with sacrifice and song; but it involves a principle applicable to all. The other side of it,—the converse to that exhibited by the prophet,—might be thus stated:—*Holy Character*, in its entireness and perfection, will come to its fitting and full utterance in the psalmody of heaven,—but the *principle* and *beginnings* of it must exist here, to qualify a man for the psalmody of earth.

Thus everything illustrates our last lesson. *The great thing is to be good.* The singer should

¹ Heb. ix. 9, 10.

² Amos v. 21, 23.

himself be a true song. His mind and heart, his reason and passions, his inward and outward life, should all be in harmony with each other, and his whole nature should be in harmony with God's. Every day and hour, every act and utterance, allowing for unavoidable human infirmity, should flow onwards and rise up as the verses and words of a Divine psalm. This is the melody that God best loves. The accordant, harmonious movements of the virtuous universe give forth an unintermitted song of infinite grandeur, sweetness and force, of which God is the sole and ceaseless auditor, and to which he is ever listening, delighted! Let us aspire to bear our part in that glorious anthem. When men are reconciled to God by the faith of Christ,—when, sanctified by the Spirit, they “appear before Him” in “the beauty of holiness,” and “walk with Him in peace and equity,”¹—then are advances made towards the realization of the picture in which the prophet portrays the ultimate and everlasting complacency of God in his church;—a prediction in itself of exquisite beauty, but which invests our present theme with incomparable magnificence. It comes to it as if it were the last hope of the mind labouring for expression to enunciate and embody some boundless thought. In “*the service of song*” could alone be found what might adequately intimate the exquisiteness and depth of *infinite delight!*—“Sing, O daughter of Zion; be

¹ Mal. ii. 6.

glad and rejoice with all thine heart." "THE LORD
THY GOD is in the midst of thee; HE *will rejoice*
over thee with joy; HE WILL REST IN HIS LOVE.
HE WILL JOY OVER THEE WITH SINGING!"¹

¹ Zeph. iii. 14, 17.

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