

## Messenger and Visitor

The Maritime Baptist Publishing Company, Ltd.

Publishers and Proprietors

TERMS } \$2.00 PER ANNUM.  
\$1.50 IF PAID IN ADVANCE.

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85 Germain Street, St. John, N. B.

Printed by PATERSON & CO., 105 and 107 Germain St.

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### Praise in Worship.

To some observations offered last week upon the subject of worship, we desire to add here, by way of supplement, few words with particular reference to praise in worship. That praise is an appropriate and Scriptural form of worship no devout person will question. It is the spontaneous expression of the believing and grateful heart. Of old God's people worshipped him in psalms and spiritual songs. Nowhere does the religious spirit of the older dispensation find so full and spiritual expression as in its psalmody. In plaintive songs the Hebrew saints poured out before God their sorrows and complaints, their confessions of sin, their prayers for deliverance, and when their faith rose above their fears, they gave voice to their thanksgiving in joyful strains, and sang in triumphant notes of the mercy and the goodness, the faithfulness and loving-kindness of the Lord. The hills and valleys rang with the pilgrim songs, as the people went up in companies to Jerusalem, to present themselves before the Lord at the feasts, and in the Temple service voice answered to voice in the singing of antiphonal praises. And that old Hebrew psalmody still throbs with the inspiration of praise and prayer. However much, in many respects, the Christian has advanced beyond the Jew, he has not yet outgrown the psalms of the Old Testament. Frequently, in his most spiritual moods, he finds in them still the best expression of his deepest needs and highest aspirations.

Christian worship, when untrammelled and spontaneous, is always accompanied with praise. The early Christians spake to one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in their hearts unto the Lord. Even in the dungeon of the Philippian jail, Paul and Silas sang praises at midnight, and wherever Christians have been permitted to worship God according to the dictates of their own hearts, whether in the little company or in the great assembly, their feelings have found expression in the humble, grateful song of love and praise, or in the triumphant anthem which ascribes the glory and the victory to him who has redeemed them with his blood.

In our own times a large place is given to music in connection with Christian worship. Time and thought, money and musical talent, are devoted to this end. It is well that this should be so. The gospel can be, and should be, sung as well as preached. The devotion of the congregation can be, and should be, helped by the voice of praise as well as by the voice of prayer. In some city churches the cost of the music furnished is comparatively large. It is sometimes questioned whether this money would not be expended more in accordance of the spirit of Christianity, if it were used to provide for the preaching of the gospel in communities which are destitute of such privileges. It will hardly be thought unreasonable that those who are among the destitute should take that view of the subject. At all events it must be generally admitted, that any large expenditure of money for church music, can be justified from a Christian standpoint only if the effect is really to promote a spirit of praise, and to help the people to worship God in holy song. That is the main consideration. Whether there shall be an organ or an orchestra, or both or neither, whether there shall be a paid choir or a voluntary choir, or no choir at all, are secondary matters, if only the grand end is attained, and that end must be to inspire and help the congregation to a hearty and devout utterance of the praises of God.

We must confess that, as it appears to us, the aim indicated above is not, as a general thing, being achieved, or even intelligently aimed at, in the churches at the present time. There are in all our congregations potential forces of song, which, if developed and called forth, would fill each church with sounding praise. But little or no attempt appears to be made to develop these forces or engage them in the worship. Whatever training there is, is confined to a few persons who compose a choir, and the general effect, if not the aim, of what is done to promote the music of the church, is to discourage, rather than to encourage, any hearty participation on the part of the congregation in the praises of the sanctuary. In many city churches it is considered necessary to secure for the choir one or two persons at least, who have a musical reputation sufficient to make their singing in the church an effective attraction to that class of people which cares much more for artistic singing than for gospel preaching, and under the circumstances it is hardly a matter of surprise if the class is a growing one. What is wanted in connection with our church worship is not that kind of music which challenges the judgment of the critic by its effort at artistic effect, but a kind of music which is itself begotten of the spirit of devotion, and which arouses and engages the musical sensibility of the worshipper, while it inspires his devotion and helps him to give its expression in uplifting spiritual song. Such an ideal may not be easy of attainment. Few ideals are. That does not prove them worthless. But we do not see why the development of the musical and the spiritual in a congregation to a point in which the people should praise God in hearty, spontaneous spiritual song, should be regarded as unattainable, or why it should not be accepted as the ideal toward which constant effort is to be made.

### Rejected.

The passage from Luke's gospel, which we have as a Bible lesson for the current week, affords a remarkable example of a people sealing their own condemnation by the rejection of light and truth. If the faithful Christian preacher is sometimes sadly discouraged because he speaks into ears that are deaf to the gospel, and to hearts that are hardened against the truth, it may help him to reflect that the Master himself was not without such experience. He knew what it was to preach a gospel to those who regarded it not, and to speak in love to those who answered in scorn and hatred. We can imagine that Jesus had looked forward with great interest to that Sabbath day, and to that meeting in the synagogue at Nazareth, when he should declare to his own brethren and townsmen the gospel with which his heart was filled, and that he had longed and hoped for a favorable reception of his message at their hands. He would not ask too much of them. He had not come to them at the very outset of his ministry, nor had he had won recognition from others. It was not until John had testified concerning him that he was the Son of God, not until disciples who believed in his Messiahship had begun to gather around him, not until his teachings and his works had made so profound an impression in Jerusalem that a member of the Sanhedrin had declared his belief in him as a teacher come from God, while in Capernaum and in other parts of Galilee the fame of his preaching and his miracles had spread abroad,—not until after all this had occurred did Jesus come back to Nazareth, and ask the people, among whom for thirty years as man and boy he had lived, to listen to his message, and to believe on him as one in whom the most gracious predictions of the prophets of Israel were finding their fulfilment.

What a day that was in the history of Nazareth—how fraught with possible blessing to its people, blessing which, through the blindness of their hearts, became a curse. Never had a Rabbi more gracious words for the theme of his discourse, than those which Jesus selected from Isaiah's prophecy, and never from the lips of a Rabbi, teaching in a synagogue, had there proceeded words so gracious as those to which the men of Nazareth listened that day from the mouth of him of whom they thought as merely the son of Joseph, the carpenter. The people as they listened were not altogether unmoved. They could not but bear him witness to the words of grace that proceeded out of his mouth. Wise, enlightening words they seemed, begotten of

love, telling of hope and deliverance. But then, they reflected, who is this that assumes to speak to us with such authority as one knowing more than all our teachers? Is not this the son of Joseph, and what is this carpenter's son that he should claim that the prophecies of God are being fulfilled in him? And their bigotry became to them a veil to hide from them the face of the Christ. It is sad indeed to think of, that tragedy of Nazareth, and sadder still to think that the tragedy is being so often repeated in the lives of men and of women, before whom Jesus appears as he did to the Nazarenes, and their foolish hearts reject him in whom all holy prophecy is fulfilled, and in whom all the hope of a sinful world is centred.

There is a temper of mind which demands to see signs and miracles, else it will not believe. But that is the very temper which makes the miracle of grace on its own behalf impossible. Yet not all Israel's unbelief can make void the promises of God, nor thwart his gracious purposes. The foolish Nazarenes seek in vain to destroy him whom the Most High has anointed to declare and to embody his gospel to the world. He passes through their midst and goes his way. He marches through the centuries, the Christ of God, preaching good-tidings to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, setting at liberty them that are bruised, and proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord.

### Editorial Notes

—"For our part," says the Boston Watchman "we are at a loss to understand what men have in mind when they contrast ethical with doctrinal preaching. The moment you begin to advance reasons and motives for ethical conduct you are in the realm of doctrine, and if there is anything more barren than the reiteration of moral duties without any reference to reasons and motives we do not know what it is. The Sermon on the Mount probably would be called an ethical discourse, but it might with equal propriety be called a doctrinal sermon, for its doctrines are quite as prominent as its precepts, and there is not a precept in it that is not vitalized and enforced by its appropriate doctrine." Probably it has been an element of weakness in much preaching, whether of the moral or the doctrinal order, that it has lacked the feeling and the expression of that vital connection between precept and doctrine. The Watchman indeed, intimates as much when it expresses a desire to see a certain pastor of acknowledged ability, who had complained of the barrenness of doctrinal preaching, "devote himself for the next five years to preaching righteousness in connection with its sanctions as revealed in the New Testament."

—Dr. William Henry Green who has recently died at the age of seventy-five, had been for more than forty years professor of Oriental and Old Testament Literature in Princeton Theological Seminary. Dr. Green was eminent as a Biblical scholar, and widely known as a writer upon Biblical subjects. Among his works are "A Grammar of the Hebrew Language," first published in 1861; "The Song of Solomon," in Lange's Commentary; "A Hebrew Crestomathy;" "The Pentateuch Vindicated;" "The Argument of the Book of Job Unfolded;" "Moses and the Prophets;" "The Unity of the Book of Genesis;" "The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch;" and "A General Introduction to the Old Testament." He was perhaps the ablest and most eminent defender among Americans of the conservative view of the Old Testament Scriptures as against that of the advanced criticism of the day. He maintained the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the unity of Genesis and of Isaiah, and held that the latter book to be throughout the work of the prophet whose name it bears. Dr. Green has done valiant service as a champion for what is called the traditional view of the authorship and date of the Old Testament Scriptures, and if he has not been able to secure general acceptance for that view from the Biblical scholars of the present generation, he has at least done something to prevent the too hasty acceptance of the crude theories of the more radical critics.

—A great many hard things have been said and written against the Boers. They have been represented as ignorant, conceited, treacherous, cruel and even cowardly. Not much however, has been heard of late about their cowardice, and as to self-conceit and ignorance, these qualities in the Boer do not perhaps appear so colossal in the light of events and in comparison with the predictions which British military leaders were making a few months ago as to the duration of the war. It seems to be proved against certain of the Boers, that they have on different occasions made an unprofessional and most unpardonable use of the white flag, and unless many witnesses testify falsely, the Boer has not generally shown a humane and Christian spirit toward the Kaffirs. On the other hand there is abund-

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