

and (with some modification) in the splendid hymn (668):

"O, Thou, with him, in ancient time,
The lyre of Hebrew bards was strung;
Whom kings adored in songs sublime,
And prophets praised with glowing tongue."

But interesting as the formal structure of this striking ode may be, its thought-structure is more interesting still. It very curiously parallels in the order of its thought the story of creation as narrated in the first chapter and early part of the second chapter of Genesis. To quote a suggestive commentator, "The psalm is throughout a poetic description of the creation of the world based on Gen. 1, and retaining its order of six days' work with a supplementary seventh of rejoicing in a finished creation."

In the story of creation the first day's work is recorded in the words, "God said, Let there be light: and there was light." In this psalm the first outburst of praise to Jehovah as creatively great is graphically given in the words:

"Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment."

According to Genesis, the second day of creation saw the setting up of the firmament (the heavens) "to divide the waters from the waters"; here, likewise, the second poetic tribute to the greatness of God deals with heavens:

"Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain;

Who layeth the beams of his chambers

in the waters;

Who maketh the clouds his chariot;

Who walketh upon the wings of the wind;

Who maketh the winds his messengers,

His ministers a flaming fire."

Before further instancing the parallelism of thought with Genesis 1 we may pause to notice the poetic beauty of the author's conception of this early creative work. He thinks of Jehovah as investing Himself with nature; light is his garment, the heavens his covering tent, the supporting beams divide off the under-space into his chambers, the wind-driven clouds are his chariot, and the storm elements do his bidding as servants surrounding his throne. The last two lines quoted above are, however, somewhat variously rendered. In the rendering given it would seem that the psalmist is marking the greatness of God in his use of the phenomena of nature as his servants, but some translators prefer a rendering akin to the familiar one of the Authorized Version:

"Who maketh his angels winds,
His ministers a flame of fire,"

the interpretation being that just as God himself is present in nature, wrapping Himself in light, setting up the heavens as His tent, and using the clouds as His chariot, so His attendant angels are made to assume the form of winds and lightning.

Reverting again to the parallelism with Genesis 1, it will be seen that the third day of creation (the separation of the dry land from the seas, and the creation of vegetation) is described by the poet in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th stanzas (verses 5 to 18); but, poet-like, the author goes far beyond the bare theme, for the thought of vegetation brings to his mind the irrigating waters on which it depends—the babbling brooks or rushing rivers that "went down by the valleys;" the springs "among the mountains" that "give drink to every beast of the field," the wild asses that "quench their thirst by them;" the twittering birds in all the branches, and even man for whom all these are prepared. So here our poet

really anticipates the sixth day of creation. It is, by the way, a very fine figure we have in verses 6 and 7, where the poet represents the waters that originally covered the earth as a garment, even rising above the mountains, as feeling at the rebuke of God and shrinking back within their set bounds at the voice of His thunder.

The breach of the Genesis order involved in the anticipation of the sixth day's work is soon recovered from. The poet once more gets his imagination in his thrall and brings it back to the order of the Genesis story, taking up in the next stanza (verses 19-23), the work of the fourth day—the creation of the greater and lesser light that rule the day and night and are "for signs and for seasons and for days and for years." But once again his poetic imagination flows freely about the theme; darkness suggests to him the prowling beast, the creeping forth from his lair and the silence suddenly made hideous by the roaring of the young lion seeking his prey and the prowling beasts slinking back under cover again when the dawn comes:

"The sun ariseth, they get them away,
And lay them down in their dens,
Man goeth forth unto his work,
And to his labor until the evening."

Similarly in the next two stanzas (verses 24-30), we have the work of the fifth day of creation touched upon in the mention of the teeming life of the seas where also:

"is leviathan, whom thou has formed
to take his pasture therein."

But the psalmist sees that the work of creation does not exhaust the greatness of God. He is great also as sustainer, and so these stanzas (particularly verses 27-30) give a very beautiful expression to

the truth that "in Him" all living creatures "live and move" and have their being. Indeed, the whole passage represents the spirit of life in the lower animals as well as in man as being imported by the divine inbreathing (Gen. 2: 7), and when that spirit is withdrawn "they die and return to their dust."

The final stanza or strophe, with its closing burst of praise, may be in part conceived of as a poetic enlargement of the words found at the close of Genesis, chapter one, "And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good." Creation is ended; it is now Jehovah's turn to be glad in unbroken joy for "the glory of the Lord will endure forever," and

"The Lord shall rejoice in his works."

Into that rejoicing the poet will enter with him:

"I will sing unto Jehovah as long as I live.

"I will sing praise unto my God while I have my being."

Alas! that the divine rejoicing and the poet's meditation upon God and His works that promised to be so "sweet" (verse 34), should both be so soon marred by the horrid fact of sin, and the poet's observation of the sad fact that of all God's creation

"Only man is vile."

Alas, too, that the poet, stirred by this anomaly of sin that God so patiently bears with, should be provoked into crying out for sinners to be "consumed out of the earth."

Inspired of God though he is, and memorable as are his ascriptions of praise, he has not learned to pray,

"Father, forgive them; they know not what they do."

Religious Tendencies in Our Dominion

REV. DR. J. H. MARTHUR, EBN.

TOPIC FOR WEEK OF OCTOBER 27.

IN recent years great changes have taken place in our modern civilization, changes affecting the whole realm of life, social, industrial, economic, educational and religious. The Church has found it necessary to adjust her forms of activity to the changing conditions of the times. In the mind of many the Church has not kept pace with the new order of things. Changes have been taking place faster than she has been able to adapt herself to the new conditions.

The success of the Church is not to be measured merely by the number of her communicants. Her influence has to some extent affected the whole life of the people, individual, communal, and national. In the Middle Ages the Church was the centre of all influences and forces that tended to the elevation of the human race. Education, literature, music, art, law, medicine, all at one time were under the control of the Church, but they have long since broken their ecclesiastical bonds and are pursuing their way more or less independently. These forces, however, owe their existence largely to the Church, which fostered them in their infancy and prepared the soil in which they thrive. Schools, hospitals, orphanages and such-like do not spring up of their own accord in any country unless the Church has been there first to prepare the soil.

Gradually the Church has ceased to perform many of the functions that were once exclusively hers. Even charity, which has long been under the patronage of the Church, is attaining maturity, and

is already undertaking much on her own responsibility independent of the Church. As an organization the Church may not be so powerful as she once was, she may not dominate the life of the people so directly as she once did; but if not so powerful as an organization, her life is just as potent and perhaps more widespread as it pulsates in a hundred new organizations.

Amid this subject, hear the pronouncement of our last General Conference: "The Christian life of to-day cannot justly be measured by the standards of the past. There is to-day a Christianity without the Church which the Church fails to recognize only with loss and discouragement, and a Christianity within the Church which finds its expression in service rather than conventional religious exercises; and the most efficient church will be the church which guides its membership most generally and heartily into the widest variety of human service."

The Church is still the leader in every movement that makes for the uplift of human kind. The new and ever changing conditions of our time demand new religious movements and a wider variety of human service. Religion in its essence does not change, yet the forms of its expression and the mode of its activities must necessarily change. To-day the Church has new situations to meet, new difficulties to face, and new tasks to perform.

In the older days the activities of the Methodist Church were few and simple,