

been very simple, consisting of a few easy airs which could be easily learned, and by frequent repetition become familiar to all. As the Gospel sped its way onward, the various nationalities it reached would inevitably construct their hymns in well-known metres, and adapt them to popular tunes, the Hebrew metre and music probably modifying them to some extent. In the earliest hymns which have reached us, we find sufficient proofs of these statements. Two hymns of great antiquity have come down to us—"The Ter Sanctus" and "The Gloria in Excelsis." They were undoubtedly in use early in the third century; and may have been, in substance, among the songs of the companions of the Apostles, thus forming a connecting link between Apostolic and post-Apostolic times. Their authors are unknown; but their simplicity and fervour gave them a hold on the universal heart, and insured their preservation. The following is the version of "The Ter Sanctus" in the English Prayer Book:—"It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should, at all times and in all places, give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty, Everlasting God. Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious name, evermore praising Thee, and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory: Glory be unto Thee, O Lord Most High."

The "Gloria in Excelsis" is as follows:—

"Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace,
Good will towards men.
We praise Thee, we bless Thee,
We worship Thee, we glorify Thee,
We give Thee thanks for Thy great glory.
O Lord, Heavenly King,
O God, Father Almighty,
O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou Son, only-begotten,
And the Holy Ghost.
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
Who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.
Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer.
Thou who sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy upon us.
For Thou only art holy, Thou only art the Lord Jesus Christ, at the right hand of the Father.
AMEN."

The date of these hymns cannot be fixed with certainty. They are found in the

earliest Christian records that have reached us, and by some are supposed to be the identical "hymns sung to Christ as God" referred to by the younger Pliny in his letter to Trajan. "Let us conceive ourselves," says Dr. Islay Burns, "listening to such strains as these, sung in unison to some old Jewish chant, in antiphonal response, and we shall probably catch the very echoes of that pure Apostolic worship that resounded of old amid the glow and the tears of first love, in the workshop of Aquila, or the upper room at Troas."

Very touching it is to think that these, in all probability, were the words in which the few persecuted Christians of Pliny's days, who met before dawn to sing their hymn of praise to Christ as God, breathed the fervour of their early love. As we trace back the stream of Christian song, amid the snowy mountain tops of the distant past, here the first faint rill wells into light. And how sweet, strong, triumphant, nay, joyous, are the strains! Though the words were uttered by those who at any moment might be called to seal their testimony with their blood, there is no touch of sadness in the song—no reference to self, or to their own feelings and prospects; but all is praise, adoration, thanksgiving to Him who had redeemed them with His own blood, and given them the victory over death. It is no death-chant, but a glorious hymn of redemption, breathed by creatures, sinful indeed, but whose bonds had been broken by the mighty conqueror of sin and death, and who now, under the banner of their great Captain, were fighting against sin, assured of being "more than conquerors through Him who loved them." In them "mortality was swallowed up of life." Myriads on myriads who once sang these triumphant strains in the dawn of Gospel day, "have crossed the flood" victorious; and "with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven" they now sing "the song of Moses and of the Lamb." Very precious to us are these relics of the earliest Christian age. Soon they were covered over by a rank overgrowth of errors and idolatries—passionate appeals to saints and