

kingdom of the Lord and His Christ. For this Church and our Church which we have thus briefly attempted to delineate, we do not ask too much from professing Christians, when we ask a reverential regard to its interests and operations, a steadfast maintenance of its principles, and a faithful adherence to its Apostolic government and discipline. †

ANCIENT HYMNS.—No. I.

HYMN OF THE ANGELS.

"Gloria in excelsis, Deo."

Among our best and most spiritual treasures, we number the Psalms of David in metre. Call them rudely rhymed if you will, yet are they scriptural, simple, and beautiful, and to us thrice hallowed and endeared by a thousand Sabbath remembrances. But we must not, in our love for the Psalms, forget that many other parts of the Old Testament are inspired songs; and when we turn to the New Testament, we find four divine songs among its earliest records. The first is the "Magnificat" of Mary, the mother of our Lord: "And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour," &c. Luke i, 46—55. The next is the "Benedictus" of Zacharias: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people." Luke ii, 67—79. The next is the "Gloria in excelsis" of the Angels: "And suddenly there was with the Angels a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men." Luke ii., 13, 14. The fourth is the "Nunc dimittis in pace" of the aged Simeon: "Then took he Him up in his arms and blessed God, and said, Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word." Luke ii., 26—32.

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Of these first four hymns of the New Testament two things are note-worthy. First, They are all recorded by Luke, and by him only of the four Evangelists. Second, In each of them, with the exception of the song of the Angels, there is a striking resemblance to the Psalms of David and the songs of Isaiah and Jeremiah, many of the verses being quotations from these Old Testament Prophets.

A long interval now occurs in which no mention is made of song; but as our Lord's birth was celebrated in these hymns, so we have His dying requiem in the hymn which He sung with His disciples at the first Communion, before they went out to the Mount of Olives,—probably one of the usual Passover hymns, consisting of Psalms 113th to 118th. During the interval between our Lord's ascension and the descent of the Holy Spirit, we have no mention of praise; these were days of fasting and of prayer. But immediately after the Pentecostal blessing, the hearts of the disciples being gladdened, they burst forth again into song; and it seems to us that the words recorded (Acts iv, 24—30,) are the very words of their song, having not only the elevated style of a hymn, but marked by the peculiarity already noted, that they are, for the most part, quotations from the Psalms and Prophecies. Next, we read of Paul and Silas singing praises to God in the prison at Philippi. Then we have the Apostolic exhortations to sing psalms; and, last of all, in the Apocalypse we have many songs, some of heaven, some of earth, some of angels, some of the redeemed from among men; and more than this, we have clear intimations that praise begun now, even amid sin and sorrow, shall never end; and are told of a "new song" for the glorious future, when sorrow and sighing shall have fled away for ever.