

Pastor and People.

FOR THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.
NOTES ON WATT'S CREATION HYMN.

IESUS SHALL REIGN WHEREVER THE SUN
BY THE REV. DR. AN. MORRISON, M.A. OWEN SOUND.

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

The original consisted of eight verses rather many for an ordinary service, and so the compilers of our hymnal have only made use of five in their selection, a translation of which in Latin we furnish in the same measure, in accordance with our custom.

LATIN TRANSLATION.

Jesus regnabit sol ubi
In tota orbe it mundi.
Benigna tendent et regna
Decrescens, crescens dum luna.
Et erit quum nil amplius.

Sabâque Sheti venient
Reges, coramque hoc cadent:
Et nomen—sicut tus fragrans
Altare omni oriens
Præclarum erit per orbem.

Gens omnis illo serviet,
Amorem ejus et canet;
Infantum tenerum voces
Carebunt neque canticis,
Per gloriosos hos annos.

Felices, Is regnans, Cuncti:
Captivi erunt liberi:
Delectus, suave otium.
Pauperi, opes Gentium.
Argentum, aurum, et gemma.

Calore Cuncti sub solis
Ferantque aptos honores:
Curistes novum et carmen:
Terrestres spondant, Amen.
Nunc, seculari secula

The metrical version of the psalms in common use in the days of Isaac Watts (1674-1748) was that of Francis Rouse, Provost of Eton. This was the first hymn book of English Protestants, for in turning from the Church of Rome they also turned away from all her mediæval hymns, good and bad, orthodox or heterodox. Other versions had been tried, such as that of Patrick Sternhold and Hopkins, Tate and Brady—an English Church affairs, sanctioned in 1693, but now little used—but Rouse's version, with all its roughness and Judaism and metrical infelicities, was the favourite, and has held its place for over 200 years, and seen every rival go to the wall. With many to this day it is the only hymn book that is used in the worship of God. And when we think of its history, its traditions, associations and, above all, its fidelity to the Word, we will cease to wonder that many are slow to admit any other hymn book to the level of the psalms. These are the true Hebrew melodies, and no hymn book has ever been tested as to its value as these Songs of Zion. They were the only vehicles of praise known to our covenanting forefathers. They have been heard from the "utmost corners of the land," in the "moorland of mist," in the hiding places of the mountains, in the cell of the prisoner, and on the scaffold of the martyr. But in the days of Isaac Watts this version of the psalms was new, and had no such recommendations. Sten-net's "Hymns for the Lord's Supper" did not appear till 1683, and Mason's "Songs of Praise" till 1697. These last found some favour in the English Church on account of the author belonging to that Church, but the great bulk of the Protestant population had no hymn book but Rouse's metrical version of the psalms. And to an ear so musical and a taste so refined as that of Dr. Isaac Watts, those psalms, in many respects, were anything but agreeable, and accordingly he resolved to supplement them with a hymn book, and in 1707 he published his first work containing 222 psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Some excellent pieces like those of Bishop Ken's, the Morning and the Evening Hymn, had found their way into the homes of the people, but as yet the modern hymn book was unknown in the Church of God. This great want being met by Dr. Watts, he must be regarded as the father of English hymnody, and, as J. Bird says, this place is now to him freely accorded.

In this day when every man has a psalm, it is hard for us to realize the greatness of the work of Isaac

Watts, in making the reformation he did make in the matter of praise. He had not only a hymn book to prepare for the Church, but had to face a wall of prejudice so inveterate and invincible that to this day, in the case of many, it has not been overcome. I mean the prejudice against the use of hymns of mere human composition in the worship of God. Watts had to face the storm, the first drops of which he felt when he stood before the long faced deacons of the little Dissenting Church in Southampton upon the occasion of introducing his first hymn—65th Psalm phrase. But he had the courage to stand on his feet, and repeat the onset with hymn after hymn till he put a book into their hands containing 222 psalms and hymns and spiritual songs—a book which gave a great lift to the spiritual life of the Church—a book in which Christians were no longer compelled to wrap up the shining glories of the Redeemer in the shadowy language of types and figures, but a book that enabled them to come to God in the matter of praise as well as in the matter of prayer by a new and living way with the name of Christ on their lips.

Here, however, we speak of him not as a hymn writer, but a psalm translator. The rough verse and Judaic colouring in which Francis Rouse had presented the great truth with which the Hebrew text was charged, did not meet his view, and so he undertook the task of preparing a new version of the psalms. His design was not only to make better verses, but to divest the psalms of their Judaic character—in short, to present them in the sunlight of the Christian dispensation. With his end in view, he says: "I have entirely omitted some whole psalms, and large pieces of many others, and have chosen out of them such parts only as might easily and naturally be accommodated to the various occasions of the Christian life, or at least might afford us some beautiful allusions to Christian affairs. These I have copied and explained in the general style of the Gospel. I have chosen rather to imitate than to translate, and thus to compose a psalm book for Christians after the manner of the Jewish Psalter."

I have expressed, as I may suppose David would have done had he lived in the days of Christianity. The work was at length prepared for publication, and it issued from the press in 1719. The hymn

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun, etc.

is his translation of the 72nd Psalm, and though scarcely equal to Montgomery's translation of the same, "Hail to the Lord's Anointed" in point of literary finish, is even a greater favourite, and must ever be looked upon as one of the great hymns of the Church. This is all that can be said in regard to the genesis of this noble hymn.

It is to such a hymn as this we turn in our missionary gatherings when we would seek to rouse the sleeping energies of the Church, and quicken her faith as to the future of our world, still in a sense waiting for redemption—even the glorious liberty of the children of God; and it is in view of the sublime prospects unfolded in the sacred page that our faith seeks for such a vehicle of song—such an expression of our hope. In 1862 this triumphant hymn was sung at a great missionary meeting in Fiji, when 5,000 exchanged heathenism for Christianity, and during the quarter of a century that has transpired since how often has it been sung on similar occasions? There is no peradventure in its prophecy—no falter in its tone. In our little forecastings we can only say *perhaps*, and in our little efforts we often fail; but the Master saileth never. He will not fail nor be discouraged, till the isles wait for His law. Why should there be any faltering in its tone? The work of redemption was no peradventure in the hands of Christ, and the work of illumination will prove equally certain in the hands of the Spirit. We see not yet all things put under Him, but we see that in every passing age a decided advance on the kingdom of darkness. Never was any cause at such a low ebb as that of Christ when He was taken down from the cross and committed to Joseph's new tomb. His enemies were everywhere triumphant; the devils in hell were jubilant, and the friends of Christ, the apostle band that followed Him and the holy women that ministered to Him, were all scattered—each one to his own home. But Christ beneath the grave was mightier than Christ above the grave; and an energy new and strong took possession of His disciples such as the world had never before witnessed, in virtue of which they became witnesses for Him both in Samaria and to the ends of the earth, and though commanded

again and again to be silent in regard to that great name they loved so well on pain of prison and death, they would not, but, with their latest breath, maintained that Christ was risen from the dead and had become the first fruits of them that slept.

That was a remarkable utterance of Napoleon to his attendant on him during his exile in St. Helena, which, upon the authority of Canon Liddon, of St. Paul's, London, who has recently investigated the facts, we are disposed to regard as reliable. What did Napoleon now drawing near to the close of his mortal career, and feeling the shadow of the eternal world coming over his spirit, as the flowers do when the sun is going down beneath the western hills, what did he say to this attendant? "You speak of empires and powers. Well, Alexander the Great, Julius Cæsar, Charlemagne and myself founded empires, but on what did we found them? Force. Christ founded His on love, and at this moment there are millions ready to die for Him. It was not one day nor one generation that accomplished the triumph of religion in the world. No. It was a long war—a war for three centuries—a war begun by the apostles and continued by successive generations. In this war all the kings and armies were on one side, but on the other I see no army, no banner or battering ram, but yet a mysterious power is there working in the interests of Christianity—men secretly sustained here and there by a common faith in the great Unseen. I die before my time, and my body will be given to the earth as food for worms. Such is the fate of him called Napoleon the Great. But look to Christ, honoured and loved in every land. Look at His kingdom rising over all other kingdoms. His life was not the life of a man; His death not that of a man, but of God."

Such was the utterance of Napoleon the Great in reference to Christ shortly before his death, and if he could speak in such terms then, more than fifty years ago, how much more now? There were moments of bright spiritual vision, it would seem, vouchsafed to him in which he could see more than most men, and during which he felt something of the powers of the world to come. In some such moments he gave utterance to the foregoing statement. He was not always blind to the "manifest destiny" of the Lord Jesus—to the fact that all things are hastening to one end—that all forces are gathering around their Lord, and melting down under the reign of love. He had visions of God when he saw that after all it was not by the sword or the battering ram or the great army mustered on the field that universal empire was to be accomplished, but by the Word of God that liveth and abideth forever.

Quite in accordance with these utterances has been the progress of Christianity since Christ's day. Look back over the centuries and behold what God hath wrought! In the first century there were 500,000 Christians; in the second, 2,000,000 Christians; in the third, 5,000,000 Christians; in the fourth, 10,000,000 Christians; in the fifth, 15,000,000 Christians; in the sixth, 20,000,000 Christians; in the seventh, 24,000,000 Christians; in the eighth, 30,000,000 Christians; in the ninth, 40,000,000 Christians; in the tenth, 50,000,000 Christians; in the eleventh, 70,000,000 Christians; in the twelfth, 80,000,000 Christians; in the thirteenth, 75,000,000 Christians; in the fourteenth, 80,000,000 Christians; in the fifteenth, 100,000,000 Christians; in the sixteenth, 125,000,000 Christians; in the seventeenth, 155,000,000 Christians; in the eighteenth, 200,000,000 Christians; and in the nineteenth, before its close there will be, at a moderate calculation, 300,000,000. At the beginning of the present century there were not over 50,000 heathen converts, now there must be nearly 2,000,000 in all heathendom; and, including native agents, fully 25,000 labourers all over the Church, now waking up to its duty in regard to the heathen as it never did before. There are thousands of brave young spirits, both men and women, preparing to follow. The Lord is speaking to the Church as He has never done in the past, and calling upon His workers to go forth and possess the land; and this, not only for the sake of the heathen, but for her own sake. He has given the word, and the women that publish the tidings are a great host. Kings of armies flee; they flee, and she that tarrieth at home (no less than those that go) divideth the spoil. Read this hymn in the light of the facts stated when gloomy doubts arise, and you will sing it with a grander strain and a "larger hope" than the little Doctor had any conception of in his day. Peace to his memory! Among all the hymnists none has left a clearer tone. The calm, unsullied light of his fame is not dimmed by the lapse of years. His name is still fragrant, and his best thoughts, like ministering angels, traverse every land. His tomb in the unconsecrated dust of Bunfields still invites the tourist, and his effigy in Westminster Abbey commands greater respect than the busts of kings. His request that nothing should be added to his name but the words, *In uno Jesu omnia*, has been observed.