

## THE ORDINANCE OF PRAISE.

## No. V.

In turning to the New Testament, we are met at the introduction of the long promised age of the Messiah, with a revival of the Spirit of sacred song. For about 400 years the voice of prophecy had been silent, and "when the Lord again visited his people," the spirit was again poured forth and the thoughts and feelings produced by his influence find expression in strains of exalted poetry. Thus the advent of our Saviour even before his birth was welcomed with songs of praise. When Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, she "was filled with the Holy Ghost, and she spake out with a loud voice," and Mary replied doubtless under the same influence, in a sacred hymn

"My soul doth magnify the Lord  
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour,  
&c."—Luke, i.—41.

So when at the circumcision of John, his father recovered his speech, he was filled with the Holy Ghost and prophesied, his first utterance is a song of praise,

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel  
For he hath visited and redeemed his people,  
&c.—Luke, i.—67.

To this day these two hymns entitled *Magnificat* and *Benedicite* are used regularly in the morning and evening services of large portions of the Christian Church.

The birth of our Saviour was not only announced by angels, but "a multitude of the Heavenly Host" celebrated the event in an anthem of praise, and when the Infant Jesus was presented in the temple, again the old prophetic spirit again appeared. "There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And he came by the Spirit in the temple, and he took him up in his arms and said:

Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in  
peace  
According to thy word,  
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation  
Which thou hast prepared before the face of  
all people;  
A light to lighten the Gentiles  
And the glory of thy people Israel.\*

\*In the old Scottish Psalter the song of Simeon is retained by itself, without the introductory verses of the 38th Paraphrase, an addition which we presume to think no improvement.

And Anna, a prophetess, coming in at that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." (Luke ii. 25-38.)

In the life of our Saviour we find scarcely any direct references to the services of praise. We find in the narratives of the Evangelist, several allusions to music and song as connected with the habits of the Jews, (Luke vii. 32, Matt. ix. 33, Luke xv. 24-26,) but scarcely any thing bearing upon them as a portion of religious service. But we know that our Lord fulfilled all righteousness by attending regularly upon all the stated services of the temple, and of the synagogues. From that first passover to which he went up, when twelve years of age, with his parents and in the company of "his kinsfolk and acquaintance," he regularly went up to Jerusalem to the great National festivals, and on these as well as in the other sacred services of the Jewish worship. His voice doubtless joined in "a song when the holy solemnity was kept." The Psalms from the 120th to the 134th, are called "songs of degrees" or as most modern interpreters translate the phrase, "songs of the going up," and are believed to have been composed with reference to the children of Israel going up to Jerusalem, to observe their appointed festivals; and as the company to beguile the tedium of the way, or at their resting place, sang the songs of Zion, we cannot doubt that the voice of Jesus mingled in their melodies.

Toward the close of our Saviour's life one incident is recorded of peculiar interest as connected with this subject. When he entered Jerusalem previous to his last passover, and he was recognized by the people as the deliverer promised to Israel, the multitude "took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet him, and cried Hosannah, blessed is the king of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." "And at the descent of the mount of Olives they began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice, for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, Blessed be the king that cometh in the name of the Lord, peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." "And Jesus entered