

"a doctrine, a tongue, a revelation or an interpretation," in others the divine gift came forth in the form of a "Psalm,"—the individual, speaking by the Spirit, spake in song; and the rest of the Church, as they drank in the words and melody, joined in the exercise, and retained the gift for future use, as part of the service of song. The apostle utters no word of condemnation regarding this practice. Thus, then, it would appear the Apostolic Churches enjoyed the gift of sacred song, in common with the gifts of preaching and prayer; and if the latter are still exercised to promote edification, where is the proof that the former has ceased? If any one has a "psalm" still, shall we not, if it is found "good to the use of edifying," adopt and use it? The precepts which remain to the Church, as permanent laws, indicate that we are so to use such spiritual gifts, and that they are intimately connected with the grace of God and the work of the Spirit. Hence we have such apostolic exhortations as these:—"Be filled with the Spirit,—speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

It is in entire accordance with these apostolic precepts and practices, that we find the very first historic record of the christian Church describing the followers of Christ as singing hymns to Jesus as God. At the commencement of the second century, or about sixty years after the ascension, Pliny, a Roman governor, wrote to the Emperor Trajan that what he had discovered of the christians was, that they were in the habit of meeting before day, binding themselves with an oath to commit no wickedness, and "singing, responsively, a sacred hymn to Christ as to God." Justin Martyr, who lived in the second century, says,—“We manifest our gratitude to Him by worshipping Him in spiritual songs and hymns, praising Him for our birth, for our health, for the vicissitudes of

the seasons, and for the hopes of immortality.” Origin, who lived in the third century, says,—“We sing hymns to God who is over all, and to His only begotten Son, the Word and God.” Thus, then, the very first sound that reached the Pagan ear from the secluded sanctuaries of christianity, was that of their hymns to God and Christ. We are not for a moment to suppose that the early christians neglected the rich inheritance of religious lyrics which they had received from the Jewish Church. On the contrary, the Psalms of the Old Testament were early introduced into the public services; but with these, it is unquestionable they also used hymns from the earliest times. Tertullian says, in describing their worship, “We are invited to sing to God, according as each one can propose a subject from the Holy Scriptures, or of his own composing.” There is historic proof that so early as the fourth century hymn-books were in existence.

There is something very touching in the thought of these early christians,—some of whom had listened to the melting words of the disciple whom Jesus loved, or gathered to hear the fervid Paul, as he passed rapidly from place to place, bearing the standard of the cross—meeting together, in the morning air of the christian ages, and giving voice to their new-born faith and love in sacred song. We look back into those dimly-seen ages, when, at the peril of their lives, the followers of the meek and lowly One met together by the river side, in the upper room of some poor dwelling, or in the Catacombs of Rome, with the tramp and din of the great city far over head and the stillness of death around these subterranean vaults. We see them moving stealthily, silently, at earliest dawn or night's stillest hour along the streets of Athens, Corinth, or Rome, under the shadow of the great heathen temples that proudly lift their glittering heads to the clouds—past the statues of Jupiter, Apollo and Venus—on to the place where “two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ seeking the promised blessing.—Then the doors are shut; but, though deadly enemies are near, fear cannot deter