

The one exercise is not more sacred than the other: and, therefore, if we are to be shut up to the exclusive use of the Psalms of David in praise, why not use those Psalms in prayer which are more truly prayers than songs of praise? Besides, if we are entirely to exclude the human element in praise, we ought to sing, not the metrical, but the prose version of the Psalms, which is exclusively used in the Jewish synagogues, and is said, or chaunted, rather than sung. In fact, the Christian Church has ceased to think and feel exclusively in the Psalms of David; and hence those religious bodies who have held so long and so tenaciously by the exclusive use of the Psalms, are beginning to recommend new versions which, though literal even to baldness, are yet closely modelled, as to number and music, on the hymns used by other Presbyterian churches. Thus, the Associate Presbyterian Church are issuing new versions of the Psalms, in their magazine, which we presume they intend to sing in the public worship of God. The specimens already exhibited are in every sense greatly inferior to our present version of the Psalms. The poetry is execrable. Take, for example, the following inimitable doggerel, which its versifier evidently intended for part of the 23rd Psalm:—

Jehovah is my shepherd—
My wants shall be supplied;
He leads me in green pastures
Along the water's side.

My spirit he restoreth
When I my sins confess,
And leads me, for his name's sake,
In paths of righteousness.

The propriety of singing hymns in the Christian Church, may be argued from the fact that it is one of the most effective methods of communicating religious instruction. In all ages, poetry has lived in the hearts of mankind, and moulded their character. Hence Fletcher of Saltown, said, that if he were permitted to make the ballads of a nation, he cared not who made its laws. And it is true in a still more important sense, that he who is permitted to make the hymns of a church, need care little who preaches, or who makes its creed; for the commonly received psalmody will slowly but surely mould the popular faith and form the popular character. In the Old Testament, we have either the religious experience of the faithful, or an enumeration of the great deeds of God in behalf of his people; and this seems to have nourished the flame of devotion, where it would have been otherwise extinguished. The same truth may be widely traced throughout the Christian Church; and therefore, it is of the utmost importance that the best music and the noblest poetry should be devoted to the service of God. A few illustrative instances will be sufficient to demonstrate the truth of this position.

About the close of the third century, a party arose in the Church, who denied the Saviour's supreme divinity, and who maintained that he was only a super-angelic Being. Among other attempts to propagate this heretical doctrine, one of the most successful was the composition of hymns, containing their erroneous sentiments better composed than those sung by the orthodox. "They held religious assemblies during the stillness of night; and, by torch-light, sang their alternate hymns. By such means, more than by their discourses, they enlisted the sympathies and affections of the common people. The orthodox party were quite conscious of the influence which these hymns gave to their opponents; and hence Ambrosius and Prudentius composed hymns for the general Church with more attention than had been formerly paid to rhythmical exactness. These hymns contributed, in no small degree, to the furtherance of devotion; and, through their instrumentality, the rude nations of Germany were converted to the faith as it is in Jesus.

During the middle ages, nothing but Latin poems were permitted in the Church; and as might have been expected, they failed to exert any beneficial influence on the mind of the community. But when Luther shook off the Roman yoke, he composed German hymns, for the use of the people. His hymns are of five classes; to wit, translations and extensions of old Latin hymns; accommodations of ancient German hymns, translations of psalms, paraphrases of passages from the Bible, and simple poems on scriptural subjects. The first edition of this hymn book was published in 1524, and within one year from the date of publication no less than four editions were required. So marked an influence did they exert over the minds of the people, that one of the friends of the Reformation remarked, that many hundreds embraced the Gospel through their

instrumentality who might not otherwise have heard of Luther's name. And the Jesuit Konysmus complained that the hymns of Luther had slain more minds than his sermons and dissertations. "These hymns did effect a mighty change in the community. They were sung by men, women and children, in the market-place, in the fields, and in the house; and hence it could excite no astonishment that the doctrines of the Reformation were, to use the words of a Jesuit, "sung into the hearts of the people."

These illustrative instances show the value of music and poetry in the public worship of God. But, for the purposes of instruction, it is necessary that our psalmody should not only be understood, but felt; and therefore, in addition to the psalms, a wise selection of hymns, such as is sanctioned by the United Presbyterian Church, is imperatively demanded. The adoption of such a book is not inconsistent with any principle or precept in the New Testament, and that it is calculated to increase and nourish the flame of devotion in the heart is attested by experience, and by the history and practice of the best churches during the most lively periods of their existence.

REVIEWS

THE COMING STRUGGLE, &c. Reprinted in Toronto, by Thomas Macleay.

This is a small, cheap, clever pamphlet, on Prophecy, especially in regard to Russian Aggression, the downfall of the Turkish Dynasty, and the Restoration of the Jews. More than 100,000 copies were immediately sold in Great Britain on its appearance, and the re-print here has had a large sale. We do not subscribe to every thing in it, but it is well worth reading and studying. Our readers may remember, two years ago, in a series of articles on the Jews, that reference was made to an approaching crisis in the Turkish Empire, and the position in which the Jews would be placed by its downfall, &c. With gratification we find these views here maintained; and now that there are "rumours of war," the interest of prophecy on these points is deepened, and the observation of national movements is more intense. There may be war immediately between Russia and Turkey, and then Europe will be in a blaze, and Britain determined at every hazard to keep Palestine, and to do this, bring back the Jews to keep it, as the key to the East; or there may be a "patch up" among the cabinets, but war there will be ere long. The doom of Turkey is written, and so is the restoration of Israel. We give the following extract, which, both in a political and religious aspect, is of great interest, and will excuse its length:—

The many and severe wars which our country has had to sustain, in order to preserve her Eastern territories, have by many been considered as too dear payment for their possession. We do not here, however, enter on this question, but beg to inform such that a far higher purpose than commercial interest or extended empire is to be served by the presence of the British power in the East. So far, indeed, as she herself is concerned, this may have been the real aim, and now that she is in possession, the physical advantages which accrue from them will be a sufficient incitement to their retention. To preserve the East India market, and keep a path open to it, Britain will strive much and do much; but while her rulers may think they are merely serving the nation, they are really accomplishing one of the grand designs of God; and evolving events, while they cause her to take measures for the preservation of this distant part of her empire, will really and only produce occurrences which will facilitate the great design of Jehovah. Both God and Britain had a special design in the annexation of the Indian territory to the lion-power, but these designs were as different in nature and object as the finite from the infinite. While Britain thought only of wealth and conquest, God thought of his ancient people, and of his covenant, and placed the British lion in the East to prepare a way for his ransom, and to become their protection in the infancy of their restoration. Such is God's design, and he has enlisted the energy of the Anglo-Saxons in its accomplishment, by making it their interest to bring it to pass. The value of these lands to the nation is the inducement he has given it to retain them at all risks: and one means of their retention, which will by-and-by become very obvious, will be to do that which will tend immediately to the accomplishment of Jehovah's long-promised purpose—the restoration of the Jews. The idea has long been held, by those few who do believe in a restoration, that it must be preceded by a conversion. This is erroneous. The Jews will return to their own land in as great ignorance regarding Christ as when they left it. They will be converted—of this we are assured; but it will be subsequent to their re-establishment in Palestine, and by the immediate operation of the Divine Being. In the many passages of Scripture which speak of this people "acknowledging the Messiah, we can never identify the agency to be employed in bringing about the change as human. The Lord invariably speaks of it as his own work, and to be done, as only Divinity can do it.