

Before the apostolic Church had passed away or the persecution of the Christians had begun, however, there lived in Alexandria in Egypt a philosopher named Philo. He was a highly connected Jew, about sixty-nine years of age when our Saviour was crucified, and lived for several years afterwards. Although not in constant fellowship with the apostles in Jewry, he is considered by many eminent men to have been a Christian.

Among his writings this passage, referring to the manner of social work at Alexandria, occurs: "After supper sacred songs began. When all were arisen they selected from the rest two choirs, one of men and one of women, in order to celebrate some great festival, and from each of them a person of majestic form, and well skilled in music, was chosen to lead the band. They then chanted hymns in honour of God composed in different measures and modulations, now singing together and now answering each other by turns."

Ignatius, the disciple and companion of the apostles, who was martyred between 106 A.D. and 116 A.D., writing to the Ephesian Church, used expressions that would lead the reader to infer that Christians employed music in their public praise. By the word music is meant something more than the ancient method of chanting the Hebrew psalter.

Justin Martyr wrote an Apology, or vindication of the Christian faith, to the emperor, Antoninus Pius, in the year 150 A.D., in which he speaks of the believers singing hymns. This faithful man of God was martyred in 167 A.D.

In the earliest notices we have occurring in any pagan writers of this second century, it is noteworthy that Christians are represented as beginning their services with praise, literally obeying the command, "Come before His presence with thanksgiving," "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise."

Pliny, for instance, wrote a letter to the emperor, Trajan, about the beginning of the second century accusing the Christians of neglecting to sacrifice, and that they met together before the rising of the sun to sing "hymns to Christ as to a God." Probably some of them would be Messianic psalms.

Tertullian was a seven-year-old lad when Justin Martyr was martyred, and about the year 200 A.D. wrote that the Christians sang compositions based on portions of the holy Scriptures. "Every one sung a hymn out of the Bible or of his own composing, approving ourselves grateful to God by celebrating His praises with hymns and other solemnities."

It is true that the music would be very incomplete. No new species of it was invented for the purpose of praising God, so far as history can show, and we are left to infer that while the psalms were still chanted, the tunes used by the Greeks in their songs were adapted to their hymns and spiritual compositions.

Origen (185-254) says: "The Greeks pray in Greek, the Romans in Latin, and other people in the language of their own country celebrate the praises of God to the utmost of their power." "We sing hymns to none but the supreme Being, and to His Son, in the same manner as they (pagans) sing to the sun, the moon, the stars, and all the heavenly host. All the congregation took part," he says, "in good tune and concert."

It would seem that while the most ancient melodies used in the church had been adopted from the pagan Greeks, no effort was made to transcribe them. They were retained by memory only, and handed down orally from one generation to another, for no fragments have been discovered either in the east or the west.

It is very probable that in Palestine and the adjacent countries, where the greater proportion of the church would be Jews, the chanting of psalms as the apostles and their immediate successors had done, would be retained.

There were different methods in use in the ancient church of performing psalmody, such as

1. To have the psalm executed by a single voice, while all the congregation listened.
2. To have the whole congregation chant it together.
3. To divide the congregation into two parts, or choirs, and sing alternate verses.
4. To have one person sing the first half of the verse, and the congregation to finish it.

Perhaps another method was for the precentor to recite a verse, and have the congregation repeat it after him.

Where paganism prevailed, however, and the converts had been brought up in the idolatrous praise of their gods without having been acquainted with the psalter of the Jewish Church, hymn music would be the most natural way of offering praise, and would in all probability resemble that which had for years before been used in the temple worship of both Greeks and Romans. When we consider the versification of the few that have been preserved, as different from that of the psalms, or any other Hebrew poetry, we have indisputable proof of it.

Coming down to the early part of the third century we find that hymns of human composition were used. One of them, a hymn to the Saviour, found in the writings of Clement of Alexandria, and composed by him, was likely sung by the Christians of this Egyptian capital. He also wrote about the way they conducted their service of praise.

"This chosen mountain of the Lord, unlike Cithæron which had furnished subjects to tragedy, it is dedicated to truth, a mountain of greater purity, overspread with chaste shades. It is inhabited by the daughters of God, the fair lambs, who celebrate together the venerable orgies, collecting the chosen choir. The singers are holy men, their song is the hymn of the Almighty King. Virgins chant, angels

glorify, prophets discourse while music sweetly sounding is heard."

During this century influential bishops sometimes introduced these hymns on their own authority, but the practice awakened suspicions, and was considered irregular by the Church. For instance, Paul of Samosata, was blamed before the Council at Antioch, in 269 A.D., for discontinuing the use of psalms, and for establishing a new and very objectionable hymnology.

Coming down to the fourth century we have greater details given, and find that considerable changes have taken place.

A great impulse was given to praise by three eminent men living apart from each other, namely, Ephraim at Edessa in Syria, Chrysostom at Constantinople, and Ambrose at Milan in Italy.

Choirs have been mentioned already as a part of the necessary equipment of public praise. Their origin dates back to apostolic times, for, as we noticed before, Philo of Alexandria writes that they were employed in his day.

The word choir comes from a Greek word meaning to dance, or to a company of dancers. The derivation is remarkable, as it certainly does not arise from some similarity of sound, or from fancy, as many of the ancient Hebrew words did.

Suidas, who wrote in the tenth century an historical and literary encyclopædia, defines the word as "a company of singers in a church," that is, a choir, and then explains it in a more local sense as dancers, and mentions the place where they danced. Homer uses the word in the latter sense. "They made smooth—or level—the place appointed for dancing."

Ephraim in Syria trained choirs in his time, during the fourth century. He had one composed of virgins alone, who sang the tunes he had selected and set to the hymns he had written.

These compositions were mainly historical, treating on the nativity, baptism, fasting, passion, resurrection and ascension of our Lord, and were quite suitable for public praise.

The choir attended the services held on the festivals of our Lord, of the martyrs, and on the Sabbath. Ephraim acted as leader, and while the singing was going on stood in the centre to guide them by his voice and action. From this time metrical hymnology became a fixed element in the worship of the Syriac-speaking churches.

A source of trouble began now to be felt that called for immediate action. Private individuals throughout the east had been in the habit of composing hymns for social worship that were sometimes used in their public assemblies. A number of these were at variance with the fundamental doctrines taught by the clergy, and were exceedingly dangerous in disseminating heterodox views among the ignorant laity. When the Church recognized this state of things, she took occasion at the Council of Laodicea, held about 360 A.D., to adopt the fifty-ninth Canon, which forbade the use of "private psalms" in public worship.

By this time a wonderful change had taken place in the outward affairs of the Christian Church. From being down-trodden and persecuted, she had become the recognized religion of the empire. She was no longer obliged to hold her assemblies by night in private dwellings, or dens and caves of the earth. Wealth and honour were showered upon her as she enjoyed the world's peace, and she established herself in splendid edifices where she could engage in the method of divine worship she desired.

We now read of chanters and canons being appointed to officiate daily in the church.

They were quite distinct from the readers, and were called *canonici* or *psalta*. It is impossible to tell when they originated. It is certain they existed previous to the Council of Laodicea mentioned above. They were probably established in the Holy Land and centres of Jewish influence in imitation of the ancient temple worship, and the pagan Christians would naturally adopt them as being in keeping with the service of praise rendered to their former gods. A *canonicus* (from *canto* to sing) was one who looked after the divine worship, and saw that it was rightly and regularly performed. So great had become the power and influence of these *canonici* that the Council of Laodicea forbade all persons singing in the church except this order, which had been established for this purpose.

The historian Eusebius, who died 340 A.D., writing of the consecration of churches in the time of the Emperor Constantine, says: "There was one common consent in chanting forth the praises of God; the performance of service was exact; the rites of the church decent and majestic; and there was a place appointed for those who sung psalms; youths and virgins, old men and young." He also tells us that a regular choir and a well-defined method of singing the public service of the sanctuary were first established at Antioch, the capital of Syria, during the reign of Constantine.

Jerome and Chrysostom both state that it was customary, on certain occasions at least, to stand during the service of praise, and some of the Egyptian clergy stood with outstretched hands pointing heavenward while it was being conducted. Cassian (351-448) further states that while the singers stood the congregation remained seated.

Socrates writes that at Constantinople the Arians used to go marching through the streets singing their hymns, and attracted the common people. Chrysostom, to counteract their efforts, ordered the Christians to do the same. This is the first mention of processional singing by the Church.

In the west during the fourth century, the subject of praise received a great impetus under Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (374-398). A decided *cantus* was used by him for the psalms. Eusebius tells us that he resided for a long time in Antioch in Syria, and from there carried his melodies to his western diocese. By him the Ambrosian chants—as they were called—were established, and the antiphonic style of singing first introduced into Milan.

During this century the psalms of David continued to be sung over the whole church in prescribed courses, or in their order. On special occasions particular psalms designated by the bishop were sung.

Augustine (354-430) in the year 384 A.D. went to Milan, an unprincipled, debauched, but popular teacher of rhetoric. While there he heard Ambrose preach, and under his teaching was converted in 387 A.D. Going into the church for the first time after he became a child of God, he writes: "The voices flowed in at my ears, truth was distilled in my heart, and the affection of piety overflowed in sweet tears of joy." On another occasion he writes that public praise was "with a joint harmony of voices and hearts." At this time it was first ordered that hymns and psalms should be sung after the manner of eastern churches.

(To be Continued.)

ABOUT DEGREES.

MR EDITOR,—I do not care to praise too much. This is not a song of degrees. But I do not wish to be understood as the "lean and hungry critic" to whom the grapes are sour. Having been opposed to the acquiring of the degree conferring power by theological seminaries, I have followed with some interest the exercise of that power, and I confess, with pleasure that it has been exercised with a reasonable amount of firmness and discretion. The trouble is that pre-eminent merit is rare, and so it comes to pass that many of the undubbed think they are as worthy as those who have got it. Our ecclesiastical titles, even our simple Rev., are conventional and historical rather than necessary and scriptural. Our academical titles are conventional and prudential so far as the conferring of them is concerned. Nobody expects *causa honoris* to invariably indicate scholarship or even conspicuous merit. Why should it?

The professions are not evenly balanced in the matter of degrees. The young medical man goes out to the world a doctor, and it would save some heartburning if a cheap and easy process could be discovered by which the young preacher could also go forth to his work a doctor. Then those who were passed by would not mourn for themselves or say sneering things about their more fortunate brethren. Then the Beechers and the Spurgeons and the smaller men who imitate them could not confer upon themselves the unique distinction of refusing a degree. It requires more self-centredness and general bumpiness to decline a degree than to accept it.

In my unwise youth I made war against such terms as Rev., D.D., etc., and such things as gowns and bands, etc. Now I look back upon the wasted energy, and say *Cui bono?* We may say of these titles and vestments what the old Scotch lady said about "total depravity,"—"It was a very good doctrine if it was only lived up to."

GUSTAVUS SCHWARTZ.

LEGISLATION ON SABBATH OBSERVANCE.

MR. EDITOR,—Allow me to call attention to the fact that a Bill has been introduced in Parliament to provide for the better observance of the Lord's Day. The provisions of this Bill will be in the line of the petitions passed by our General Assembly and the petitions circulated by the Lord's Day Alliance.

A good number of petitions in support of such a measure has been forwarded to me, and will be presented in due time, but many more should be sent in, and that just as soon as possible.

Let the petitions be laid before the congregations for signatures, and when sufficiently signed be forwarded at once to the member of the riding in which the signers reside, with the request that he present it to Parliament. Hundreds of such petitions might be showered into the House of Commons within a month—within a fortnight even.

Clerks of Presbyteries have been fully supplied with forms of petitions, but if any minister or person wishing to get up a petition desire a form, I will be glad to furnish one. The form of petition may be also copied from the Assembly's Minutes, Appendix 14, p. 111.

I trust that friends of the Sabbath will express their sentiments through these petitions or otherwise before the Bill comes up for a second reading. Now is the opportunity to let our legislators and our Government know our views on this subject.

Permit me to remind those addressing documents to members of Parliament that no postage is required thereon, as members send and receive postal matter free.

W. D. ARMSTRONG.

Convener of Assembly's Committee on Sabbath Observance.

THE *Ulster Echo* says that if Belfast is the headquarters of the whiskey trade in Ireland, it is also the headquarters of the chief organization in that country for coping with the manifold evils of the liquor traffic.