

Jesus Christ, as the late compositions of modern men, but in honour of himself he had prepared women to sing at the great festival in the midst of the church, which one might shudder to hear." The reference here, is evidently to the use of these Christian psalms in public worship; and by the action of this council, on the occasion, we have the approval of this public use of hymns, by (if not the whole Catholic church) at least by a very large portion of it, judging by the extensive representation of it present, and the subsequent approval of the council's action by the general church afterwards.

We may mention in passing, as confirmatory of this public use of Christian hymns, that the great scholar and commentator named Origen, who lived and wrote in the second century, and the early part of the third, says "Hymns are sung to God and the Only-begotten."

But let us come nearer to the first century, and listen for a moment longer to the uninspired testimony.

Eusebius refers to the events of the church in the years 107 to 110; and (in Book iii, chap. 33), refers to the celebrated correspondence between Pliny the Roman Governor of Bithynia and Trajan the Emperor. Trajan, though by nature lenient, was officially a firm upholder of the Roman Laws and Roman Gods. "He renewed the old laws against secret and unlawful assemblies, and thus put into the hands of hostile Governors a weapon that was freely used against the Christians." (Prof. I. Burns.) The result noted by Eusebius was, "that multitudes were put to death for their faith." Pliny abhors the bloody work to which he is called as Governor; and sends a letter (still extant) to Trajan, asking advice. In that letter he states what he knows, from the confession of Christians, concerning their mode of social worship. He says,—"They rose before light and sung by tunes a hymn to Christ as to a God."

But we must pass now to the sacred page of history, and trace, if we can, the practice of singing hymns to Christ, while the inspired apostles were yet alive, and endeavour to ascertain whether those "new songs" have the sanction of God, either by apostolic precept or practice.

It seems to be one of God's "ways" to give "new songs" for the celebration of new and joyful events. When Israel had crossed the Red Sea and escaped from the hand of their pursuers.—"Then sang Moses and the children of Israel" that new song which has been ever since the admiration of all true poets. When the temple of Jerusalem was first erected—then God gave a whole book of psalms to the church; and, through Solomon, the song of songs. It was a new era in the history of the church, and called for new songs. The next grand era is the advent of Messiah, and it is ushered in by the songs of Mary, Elizabeth, Zachariah, and that of the shining host of angels who sang "glory to God in the highest." But when Messiah had fulfilled all righteousness, and had died for our sins, and had risen from the dead, and had ascended gloriously, and had sat down at the right of God, a Prince and a Saviour, might we not expect these new events—these transcendently great and glorious events—to call forth new songs in his church on earth? Would the psalms of the comparatively darker dispensation express the clearer light, the brighter hopes, the richer blessings and privileges of the New Testament Saints who were no longer dependent on "the beggarly elements" of Judaism, nor any longer to be subject to its bondage, but privileged to rejoice in the liberty, and grace, and truth which came in such freshness and fullness by Jesus Christ? Surely we might expect some new songs for such new and joyful events!

We have just such songs as we might expect, recorded in the Book of Revelation. They are new, and they are "sung to Christ as to God."