

The Psalms.

A paper read by the Reverend Louis C. Wurtel, of Acton, Que., before the Clergy of the Rural Deanery of Richmond, at their meeting held at Drummondville, October 13th, 1897, revised and corrected.

In II. Sam. xxii., 1 and 2, we have the words "Now these be the last words of David. David, the son of Jesse, said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel, said: The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue."

King David then himself claimed inspiration, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel must have penned many a Psalm. He must have set the tunes and appointed both the singers and the instruments of music. Thus he was serviceable to the Jews in their religious exercises.

It is no wonder that this book is denominated "The Psalms of David," for he composed by far the greater part of them.

Of the Psalms attributed to other authors, Moses was the author of one, Solomon of two, Asaph of twelve, the sons of Korah of eleven, Ethan of one, and Ezra, no doubt, composed the first two and several in the fifth division or Book of the Psalms,

These sacred songs were sung in the Jewish Services and accompanied by musical instruments.

The right of the Psalter to a place in the Sacred Canon has never been disputed. The Psalms are often alluded to in the Old Testament; and in the New they are often quoted by the Apostles S. Peter and S. Paul, and even by our Lord himself, thus confirming us in the fact of their inspiration.

Above all other portions of Holy Writ, the Book of Psalms is the one that, from the first, the Christian Church has made most use of, and in our branch of the Catholic Church, the Psalms are ordered to be read through

once every month, that is, twelve times in the course of the year.

The wisdom of this command is evident from the fact that by the frequent perusal of these sacred songs the faithful Churchman becomes imbued with the godly tenor of them, and it matters not in what condition a Christian may be, nor what may be the state of his feelings, he will be sure to find in the Psalms some portion suitable to his case, as if it were specially written for himself. This is a wonderful fact which surely displays the hand of God in their composition.

There are five divisions, called books, in the Psalter: -

The first, from Psalm I to XLI inclusive; the second, from XLII to LXII inclusive; the third, from LXIII to LXXXIX inclusive; the fourth, from XC to CVI inclusive, and the fifth containing the last forty-four Psalms.

The first, second and third books end with "Amen and Amen"; the fourth with "Amen, Hallelujah", and the fifth with "Hallelujah".

No doubt these books were compiled by different persons and at different times.

As regards the first book, there can be no doubt but that King David himself was the compiler of it, with the exception of the first two Psalms, which were prefixed by Ezra, the Scribe, when he arranged the Psalms into one volume.

This first book must have been compiled about the time King David brought the Ark from Kirjathjearim to Jerusalem, about the year 1040 B.C.

The second book was probably compiled about forty years afterwards by King Solomon, after the building of the Temple, about the year 1000 B.C.

We learn from I. Kings iv., 32, that he was a true poet, and so he would be naturally inclined to add another book of Praise to the one already in use in the assemblies for the worship of the Most High.