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## TEN MEN WHO DIED FOR THEIR PRINCE

Prince Emile of Hesse-Darmstadt was a gallant young officer. Brave, bold, daring, and yet so careful of the comfort of his men. The prince attached himself to Napoleon Bonaparte in the mad invasion of Russia. Napoleon waited at Moscow expecting almost hourly the submission of the Northern Autocrat. He little knew the determined temper of the Czar and of his enraged people. After waiting in vain for the submission of Russia for a period of thirty-five days, the haughty but now humbled and crest-fallen conqueror of so many battles prepared to retrace his steps. But the temper of the Russian people roused to fury inflicted an awful revenge. Fires broke out in various parts of the city. The sullen determination was taken to lay their capital in ruins, rather than it should afford a shelter for the French. The scene baffles description. Frantic efforts were made to subdue the flames, but in vain. Numbers perished. Napoleon himself escaped with difficulty. The whole city was soon a huge, blackened ruin; what was to be done?

The rigours of a Russian winter were almost upon them. There was no protection from the pitiless blasts which swept over the army chilling the soldiers to the very bone. Food could scarcely be had even at the most exorbitant prices, while the surrounding country was drained of its stores of wheat and other food. Sadly Napoleon sounded the retreat, and the horrors of that march have never yet been told. Disease, hunger, and the sword of the Cossack who hung on to the rear of the army rapidly thinned the ranks of the vast host which Napoleon considered invincible.

Prince Emile of Hesse, brave, alert, and watchful, led on his men sharing their privations and encouraging them by the force of his own splendid example. They go to the bridge of the river Berenzina a month after the departure from Moscow. Now commenced an almost wholesale massacre of the French Army. The bridge was blocked, and men, so lately comrades in arms, wildly fought to cross. The weak were trampled down. Discipline ceased. Twenty-eight thousand men were either drowned in the river or slaughtered by the lances of the heartless Cossack.

When the remnant of the army crossed, Prince Emile looked in vain for his gallant company of hussars, a thousand strong when they set foot on Russian soil. The brave and chivalrous prince was amongst the last to cross the river, and but ten men gathered round their beloved leader. Faint, weary, cold, and hungry, the little band pressed on and on, till worn out and utterly exhausted, the prince told his band of heroes that he must rest where he was. To sleep on the cold ground was to be found stiff and frozen to death in the morning. Prince Emile lay down to rest and woke in the morning refreshed. The men had carried their beloved prince into a shed which afforded some protection from the falling snow and awful cold of that awful night. But more, they had actually stripped themselves of their coats and put them under him and over him. Then they lay down on the cold ground around the shed in which calmly slept on their commander. In the morning the prince on awakening was astonished to find himself so comfortably placed, when all at once the thought flashed his mind: "Are these the coats of my men?" He sprang to his feet, and there, outside the shed, lay his ten brave fellows, without their coats and frozen to death. They had sacrificed their lives for his. The love and devotedness of these ten men are beyond praise.

God loved the world, and Christ died, not for those who loved Him, but for those who hated Him, and hated Him without a cause (John 15:18-25). Who can measure the love of Calvary? This then is love. Christ dying for God's enemies (Rom. 5:10) and God loving the world that hated His Son. Has the Gospel of Calvary bowed your heart and broken your will? Has the Blood shed there purged your conscience from sin and guilt?

## **FELLOWSHIP NEWS**

**Liz Storey**

We rejoiced with Paul and Heather, on the news of the birth of their first grandchild born to Tom and Felicity on 31 December 2020. We lovingly remember Tom & Felicity and we thank God for this wonderful gift to them. Our prayer is that the Lord would bring the child to a knowledge of Himself while he is young.

On the 6 January we were thankful to Aaron Lewis for taking our weekly Bible Study via Zoom. It was also a blessing after the Study to be able to join the fellowship at Crosslanes Chapel for a time of prayer. We are so privileged to be able to continue fellowship by this means of technology, but we long that God would enable us to meet physically rather than virtually in His good and perfect time.

Although we have been unable, due to COVID restrictions, to continue the Care Home Services during the past year, Simon T and Ron M have recently been able to record some services for the Milford and Gracewell Care Homes. The staff at these homes are able to help the residents access these pre-recorded services and it is hoped that by this means a monthly service will be able to take place again. We pray that the Lord would use these Gospel messages for His glory and the salvation of precious souls.

On the 24 January, after a short period of holding Lord's Day services in the Church building again, we reluctantly made the decision that for a limited period, we would return to live streaming only. We are so glad however that a good number of members have now had the vaccine and that the numbers of infections countrywide are beginning to reduce. Our longing is of course, that in future days, we will safely be able to return to the house of God again.

The 13 February was Pastor's 50th Anniversary, as Minister here at Emmanuel. We are so thankful to the Lord for all that he, and dear Jill, have done for us as a fellowship over many years. As Pastor now retires from the full time Pastorate at Emmanuel, we pray that the Lord would continue to guide them both and keep them in all their future days. On the 10 February, the usual time of fellowship on Zoom after the midweek Bible study and Prayer Meeting allowed some members to express their grateful thanks for all that Pastor and Jill have given in service to the Lord here in Salisbury, and to also share many happy memories of times together. The Church also sent a bouquet of flowers to Jill as a small token of thanks, and many cards of appreciation were also received by them. We are so sad to have not been able to hold the Church Anniversary Service due to the pandemic, but it is hoped that we may be able to mark this occasion in some other way when restrictions allow.

The Women's Prayer Meeting was held via Zoom for the first time on Wed 17 February at 10am and was a blessed time of prayer and fellowship. The usual link for the Church Prayer meetings is used for this meeting, and any ladies who wish to join this time of prayer would be very welcome.

Our Youth Work has had to continue to operate under the current restrictions, with the Seniors meeting via Zoom on Lord's Day mornings and the Juniors and Sunday School continuing their lessons via YouTube. We pray that the leaders would know help and encouragement in these challenging times, and that the Lord would savingly bless their endeavours.

Our own member Daniel Tribe, in his 3rd year of studies at the Salisbury Reformed Seminary, is undertaking various preaching engagements. We were thankful to Dan for ministering God's Word to us on 7 and 21 February, and we pray that he and Jenni would know the Lord's leading as to their future service for Him.

We were deeply saddened to hear of the sudden passing of June N's mother, Cath Fisk, on the 24 February. Our thoughts and prayers are with Bill and June and all the family at this difficult time, that they may know the comfort of our God.

## **OUR PASTOR'S RETIREMENT**

Towards the end of last November the Elders received a letter from our Pastor, Malcolm Watts, confirming his intimation made back in March 2017- that he intended to lay down the full responsibilities of the Pastoral Office after 50 years at Emmanuel, by formally giving notice of his resignation effective from the end of February, 2021.

At the Quarterly Church Meeting in December 2020 one of our Elders, Paul T, addressed Pastor in appreciation of his time as our minister:

We recognise, Pastor, that you would first of all wish us to give honour to the Lord and acknowledge that any blessing and success over the past 50 years

is wholly attributable to the Lord and the effectual work of the Spirit amongst us.

We do give praise and thanks to the Lord for His goodness to us; and we also acknowledge that in calling you to the Pastorate back in 1971 the Lord provided this church with a man whom He had blessed with many gifts:

- A mind with the capacity to absorb and to understand the great doctrines of God's Word, to sieve and weigh the teachings and theological arguments of learned and spiritual men of the past against the Word of God, and the ability to draw right conclusions that are worthy of our following.
- A desire rightly to order worship and church government in the light of the directives of Holy Scripture.
- A heart for the Gospel, the conversion of souls, and the welfare of those souls committed to your care as an under-shepherd of the flock here at Emmanuel.

In addition, you have formed and maintained valuable links with other churches and denominations and served the wider Church by helping and giving guidance to Christian Societies, Missions, and Publications. The gift of your insightful leadership has benefited all avenues of your service but especially within our own church.

Now while it is true that God gave you these gifts, it is fitting for us, as a Church, to acknowledge with deep gratitude your dedicated and determined application in the employment of those gifts to our great benefit and to the wider Church at Conferences, Schools of Theology and not least the Salisbury Reformed Seminary. Christ, in the parable of the talents, commended those who put their talents to good use. We feel sure that you will receive His plentiful reward from our Saviour and will have the joy of seeing many, many sheaves in that garner above. As Elders we wish to thank you for your wise and spiritual leadership, your warm-hearted Pastoral care of the members and many others outside. The Deacons, too, would like to thank you sincerely for your spiritual direction in the practical matters that are their concern.

It would not be right to let this occasion pass without speaking of your beloved wife, Jill. Perhaps there are not many here who were present when Lewis Halsey, the then Church Secretary, surprised the mid-week meeting with his announcement of your engagement to Gillian Collins, which was a great delight for the church. Since 1976 Jill has faithfully, graciously, lovingly and quietly supported you in your Pastoral role, and as a church we wish to acknowledge this and thank her with deep gratitude for all her service to the Lord among his people. While Jill is not able to be with us this evening, we would like you to make her aware of our love and gratitude.

We pray the Lord will continue to richly bless and keep you in retirement, and for the continuing presence of His Spirit as you seek to serve Him.

“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour.” (Proverbs 3: 13-16)

Paul then addressed the membership:

While we all knew that this time was coming, perhaps the news that it has now come fills us with some sadness. Our trust as a Church is in God at this time, and the future is known only to Him. As Elders we are convinced the Lord is leading us on, as He has promised; and He will, in His time, provide a Pastor for us.

The Elders, while not wishing to deny Pastor his retirement, have asked him if he would be willing to provide some Pastoral oversight in the short-term and he has very kindly agreed to do this.

This means that he hopes, in the will of God, to preach occasionally for us and to chair some meetings (such as members’ and officers’ meetings) and to give help and guidance over the choice of a future Pastor. From March, several ministers have kindly agreed to minister to us on Lord’s Days and as Elders

we request your prayers, which we know are already being offered, for the Lord's guidance and wisdom.

I am sure my few words of gratitude to our Pastor fall far short and we do hope that on another occasion, if the Lord wills, we shall be able to meet together in a more informal way in order unitedly to show our love and appreciation to him.

## **A WORD OF THANKS**

I am truly grateful for these kind words spoken and written, and also for the many cards received, with their messages of encouragement. These have been deeply appreciated and I would like you all to know that I have found great comfort in your words, as these have reminded me of the blessings we have known and enjoyed together over the years. The love shown to me, and to my dear wife, Jill, has been constant and unflinching, and we thank you for it from the depths of our hearts.

*Malcolm Watts*

## **THE BIBLE**

*“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16)*

The Bible reveals the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are unchangeable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practise it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you.

It is the traveller's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Here Paradise is restored, Heaven opened, and the gates of Hell disclosed.

CHRIST is its Grand Subject, our good its design, and the Glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet.



Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure.

It is given you in life, will be opened in the Judgment and will be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, rewards the greatest labour, and condemns all who trifle with its holy contents.

## A LAMP

*“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”*

*(Psalm 119:105)*

How precious is the Book Divine  
By inspiration given!  
Bright as a lamp its doctrines shine,  
To guide our souls to heaven.

Its light, descending from above,  
Our gloomy world to cheer,  
Displays a Saviour’s boundless love,  
And brings His glories near.

It shows to man his wandering ways,  
And where his feet have trod;  
And bring to view the matchless grace,  
Of a forgiving God.

When once it penetrates the mind,  
It wars with every sin;  
Th’ enlightened soul begins to find  
Two striving powers within.

It sweetly cheers poor sinners’ hearts  
In this dark vale of tears;  
Life, light, and joy it still imparts,  
And quells their rising fears.

May this bright lamp through all the night  
Of earth direct our way,  
Till we behold the clearer light  
Of an eternal day!

John Fawcett, 1782

*Submitted by Paul & Helen M*

## **PESTILENCE**

We may think the COVID-19 pandemic and steps to control it are hard to bear, but reading *Glimpses of Pastoral Work in Covenanting Times* by William Ross (1877), I realised that our sufferings are as nothing compared to those in mid seventeenth century Scotland. Rev. Ross constructed his narrative by examining the session minutes from the period 1644-1662. These relate to the church in Dalgety, a beautiful area on the northern shore of the Firth of Forth. 1645 was probably the most challenging year. Food was in short supply because of a poor harvest in 1644. A large Scottish army needed food and other supplies in England. The Marquess of Montrose was pillaging and killing his fellow countrymen. On top of these pestilence struck. Thousands of infected people were quarantined in huts in Edinburgh; ships were forbidden entry to the harbour at Burntisland. The minister, Andrew Donaldson, was called to be chaplain to a regiment of the army for five months. The minutes record:

Sermon in the fields because of the pestilence. No preaching all the time the minister has been in England.

1. Because immediately after his removal the enemy came to the bounds, and for a month after that lamentable fight at Kilsyth, ministers durst not hazard almost to keep a presbytery. or come abroad, and

2. when it pleased the Lord to deliver the land by the Scottish forces that came from England, at Philiphaugh (a day to be held in remembrance by God's

people in this land), it pleased the Lord to visit this congregation with pestilence, so that the presbytery could not safely come here to preach.

Infected people had crept into the church to pray. The healthy took fright and would not go within its walls so the sermon was in the fields in the depth of winter, until the building had been thoroughly cleansed. After the next Lord's Day service, the minister and elders were informed that cases of the pestilence had appeared near the church. They went to the dwelling, and made sure that the afflicted persons received care.

The Dalgety kirk-session "appointed a house to be burnt, because of an infection" and then gave a substantial sum of money to help repair it.

A few ministers were not so caring, as appears by the following minute of the Synod of Fife: The Presbytery of Dunfermline removed, censured. Some of the brethren there exhorted not to remove their own persons from their charge in the time of the distress their flocks are under, because of the plague of pestilence. It was not until 250 years later, when the Bubonic plague struck Italy, that it was established that this pestilence was spread by the fleas carried by infected rats.

*Submitted by Richard W*

## **SHENANDOAH'S FLIGHT AND TRAGIC END**

Such were some of the headlines of the newspapers accompanying pictures of the giant "Mistress of the Air," as they called her. How little its commander and passengers thought when they startled that ere another morning fourteen of the precious souls it carried would have passed out of this life, to be in the presence of a holy God.

The giant Airship swept over the Delaware River in daylight, and many an eye turned upward with pride to see another instance of Scripture fulfilment that in cleverness man "has sought out many inventions" – but do any of these inventions bring man nearer to his God? "Thou answerest them, O Lord our

God: Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions” (Psa. 99:8). The next verse says, “Exalt the Lord our God,” but that is the last thing man thinks of doing. Instead of this, man takes all the praise, and so God blows on his inventions over and over again, “to withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man” (Job 33:17).

Onward to Ohio swept the giant Ship, and directly into the path of the storm that broke her to pieces. Should it not make man feel that it is still true that his number is 666 – one short of perfection? Should it not lead him to say, “If the Lord will... we shall do this or that? But if now you rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicings is evil” (James 4:16, 17).

Bound for eternity we all are. How soon we may arrive at our destination we cannot tell; but is it not wise to be ready? – seeing our breath is in the hand of God, and at any moment in any way we may be called out of this life for ever, away from man’s things, to where God is, to whom all must give account (see Rom. 14:11, 12).

One of the survivors said if they had had warning that the storm was coming they might have saved the ship by taking another course; but, now knowing, they rushed into it in the early morning. “He causeth His wind to blow” (Ps. 147:18) – “stormy wind fulfilling His word” (Ps. 148:8).

You, my dear reader, are like that Airship, “bound for Eternity,” and you will have to meet an awful storm if you do not seek shelter now before it bursts in all its fury.

But “a Man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and as a covert from the tempest” (Isa. 32:2). That Man is Christ, and to save you and me from that awful storm of God’s judgment He endured the wrath of God against sin:

“The tempest’s awful voice was heard –  
O Christ, it broke on Thee;  
Thy open bosom was my ward,  
It bore the storm for me.  
Thy form was scarred, Thy visage marred;  
Now cloudless peace for me.”

You have been warned of the approaching storm and you have been shown the safe sheltering-place; and the right time to come to Christ is now. Oh, do not turn a deaf ear, nor rush into a judgement from which you can never come out – for whatever “God doeth, it shall be forever.”

The “Shenandoah” can be replaced; money and men can do that; but if you go unsaved to judgement of God, your loss is beyond repair.

“To lose your wealth is much;  
To lose your health is more;  
To lose your soul is such a loss,  
That no-one can restore.”

*A. H. Stewart*

## **CHECKMATE!**

### **Malcolm H. Watts**

Adam was created righteous and holy, without the least taint of corruption, and all the tendencies of his nature were towards the Will of God. 'God said, Let us make man in our image.' (Gen. 1:26) 'God made man upright.' (Eccl. 7:29) He was endowed, however, with the power of choice and so was at liberty to do either 'good' or 'evil' (Gen. 2:16, 17). When tempted, he decided to rebel. This led to a violation of God's express command. 'The Lord God commanded the man, saying,...Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it.. And he did eat' (Gen. 2:16, 17; 3: 6). Immediately, Adam fell from a perfect into a sinful state and, in consequence, the whole human race was plunged into sin and ruin. 'By the offence of one', the Bible says, 'judgment came upon all men to condemnation' (Rom. 5:18; cf. 1 Cor. 15:22). This is what we mean when we speak of 'the Fall of Man'.

According to his eternal decree, God has intervened to save men. The result is a salvation which not only meets every need of the sinner and satisfies every

requirement of the law but one which amazingly answers every detail of the Fall. God's salvation is really his countermove. He has matched what happened when Adam disobeyed in order to cancel out the evils of sin and bring in the blessings of grace.

Let me explain by listing some striking points of contrast:-

An evil angel initiated the Fall (Gen.3:1; cf. Rev.12:9): a good angel named Gabriel, one of the noblest of the host, announced the miraculous conception of 'Jesus', 'the salvation of Jehovah ' (Lk. 1:27,31).

The first temptation came to Eve, a virgin in Paradise (Gen. 3:1; cf. 2 Cor. 11:3): the good news of the gospel was proclaimed to Mary, a virgin in Nazareth (Lk. 1:27 Note: 'Nazareth' literally means the city of 'branches' and, in view of this connection with Eden, even the name may be significant).

In Satan's deception, a lie was used, that 'ye shall be as gods', or rather, 'as God' (Gen 3:5): but in Gabriel's message, a truth was proclaimed that God would be man. 'The Holy Ghost', Gabriel said, 'shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God' (Lk. 1:35; cf. Matt. 1:23 and especially Phil. 2:6, 7).

By believing the lie, Eve became involved with the offence and also the 'curse' (Gen. 3:6, 13-19): by crediting the truth, Mary took part in the outworking of redemption and therefore in the recovery of the 'blessing'. 'Blessed is she that believed.' (Lk. 1:45) 'His name', Christ's saving name, 'shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him' (Ps. 72:17).

Adam's disobedience brought sentence of condemnation to all his seed (Gen. 3:17-19; Rom. 5:12 – margin: 'in whom all have sinned;' 5:18): Christ's obedience brought the free gift of justification to all his people (Phil. 2:8; 3:9).

'For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous' (Rom. 5:19).

The sin was committed in a garden by means of a 'tree', 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil' (Gen. 2:8, 15-17; 3:6): the sacrifice was offered in another garden and by means of a very different tree (Acts 5:30,31). 'In the place where he was crucified there was a garden.' (Jn. 19:41) 'His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree' (1 Pet. 2:24).

Judgment came on the sixth day of the week 'in the cool (or breeze) of the day' i.e. in the late afternoon when the wind rises (Gen. 3:8): mercy came at the same hour. 'Now from the sixth hour (twelve o'clock mid-day) there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour (three o'clock). And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice... ' (Matt. 27:45,46. Noteworthy also is the fact that three o'clock in the afternoon was the time for the evening sacrifice in the Temple).

Our first parents eyes were opened to behold their shame and misery (Gen. 3:7): our eyes must also be opened to behold Christ and his great salvation. (Acts 26:18; Eph. 1:1) 'Their eyes were opened and they knew him.' (Lk. 24:31).

On account of the transgression, Adam and his wife were 'afraid' (Gen. 3:8-10): on account of the atonement, we are told to 'Fear not' (Matt. 28:5; cf. Lk. 1:13,30; 2:10).

The result of the Fall was Paradise Lost (Gen. 3:22-24): the result of salvation is Paradise Regained. (Lk. 23:42). 'And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face...' (Rev. 22:1-4).

*There is a land mine eye hath seen  
In visions of enraptured thought,  
So bright, that all which spreads between  
Is with its radiant glories fraught.*

*A land upon whose blissful shore  
There rests no shadow, falls no stain:  
There those who meet shall part no more,  
And those long-parted meet again.*

*Its skies are not like earthly skies,  
With varying hues of shade and light;  
It hath no need of suns, to rise  
To dissipate the gloom of night*

*There sweeps no desolating wind  
Across its calm, serene abode;  
The wanderer there a home may find  
Within the Paradise of God.*

The Bible really is an amazing book. Harmony pervades the whole, from beginning to end. It's one grand theme is 'Ruin in Adam - Redemption in Christ.'

I am reminded of a line from one of Isaac Watts' hymns: 'How well thy blessed truths agree!'

May we be given grace to appreciate the glories of God's written Word and to discover the wonders of a truly great salvation.



# PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

## John Brown of Haddington (1722-1787)

If I am a saint (one set apart to God, seeking holiness in heart and life), three questions require my serious answers:-

**What was I?** – a rebel to my God; a prodigal to my Father; a slave to my lust; an alien from the commonwealth of Israel.

**What am I?** – a son of God; a spouse of Christ; a temple of the Holy Ghost; begotten of Jesus' word, blood, and Spirit; a citizen of Zion, written among the living in Jerusalem.

**What shall I be?** – a glorified saint; a companion of angels; a triumphant conqueror; a crowned king; an attendant on the Lamb; a spectator of all these soul-ravishing and ineffable excellencies that are in God; an immediate beholder and enjoyer of Jesus Christ; nay, one with Him in His exultation; clothed with His excellencies; enthroned in His glories; crowned with His eternity, and filled with His happiness.

Oh! stand amazed at free grace. And since God hath made me a vessel filled with His mercy, let my person and life be a spring flowing with His praise.

## PSALMODY IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

### Malcolm H. Watts

The Psalter, commonly called 'The Psalms of David', was designed for use in the worship of God. The Hebrews sang the psalms in their Temple services and there is abundant evidence to show that they were sung by the early Christians (e.g. 1Cor. 14:26; James 5:13). In fact, the Psalter became the hymn-book of the Christian Church and, for centuries, it enjoyed an unrivalled place of honour in the hearts and in the praises of the Lord's people.

In this study we will trace something of the history of psalmody in Christian worship.

## The Early Church

Tertullian (160-220 AD), a famous teacher in the African Church, is the first Christian writer expressly to witness to the use of the psalms in worship. 'In our public assemblies', he says, '*psalms (are) sung*'. Elsewhere he states that the Psalm 133 was usually sung at the Lord's Supper.

So we know the psalms were sung at regular church services. According to Athanasius (296-373 AD), however, they were also sung on other, less formal occasions. Athanasius taught God's Word at Alexandria and became a champion of the orthodox and Trinitarian faith. He tells how on one occasion his church was attacked by Arian heretics and, refusing to leave, he requested one of his Deacons to lead the people in psalm-singing. This great man has left on record a fine tribute to the Psalms. 'There is a command in everything to give thanks; but *the Psalms teach us what to say when we give thanks...* We are enjoined to bless the Lord and to confess him. But *in the Psalms we have a pattern given us, both as to how we should praise the Lord, and with what words we can suitably confess to him*'.

Another important leader in those times was Basil (330-379 AD) who eventually became Bishop of Caesarea. In one of his works, he describes '*psalmody*' as '*the church's voice*'; and, alluding to a typical Christian service, he says that 'after the confession the people rise from prayer', and then 'proceed to psalmody'.

It seems that individuals, as well as congregations, delighted in this duty. Jerome (342-420 AD), the great scholar who translated the Scriptures into Latin, wrote the following in a letter to someone called Paula: 'The labourer while he holds the handle of the plough sings *Alleluia* (Praise ye the Lord); the tired reaper employs himself in the Psalms; and the vinedresser, while lopping the vines with his curved hook, sings *something of David*. These are our

ballads in this part of the world; these (to use the common expression) are our love-songs’.

Chrysostom (347-407 AD), who was called ‘the Golden Mouth’ on account of his eloquent preaching at Antioch and Constantinople, declares that ‘all Christians employ themselves in David’s Psalms.’ ‘If we keep vigil in the church’, he says, ‘David comes first, last and midst. If early in the morning we seek for the melody of hymns, first, last, and midst is David again. If we are occupied with the funeral solemnities of the departed ..., David is first, last and midst. O marvellous wonder! Many who have made but little progress in literature, many who have scarcely mastered its first principles, have the Psalter by heart’.

The greatest theologian of this period was undoubtedly Augustine (354-430 AD). Converted in Milan in 386 AD, he later recalled how moved he was by the sound of Christians singing the psalms. In his ‘Confessions’, he writes: ‘I remember the tears I shed at *the Psalmody of thy Church*, in the beginning of my recovered faith; and how at this time, I was moved, not with the singing, but with the things sung’. Much troubled by the Donatist schismatics, who claimed to constitute the only true Church, Augustine wrote in a letter to Januarius: ‘The Donatists reproach us with our grave chanting of the divine songs of the prophets in our churches, while they inflame their passions in their revels by the singing of psalms of human composition’.

Here is another fine quotation, this time from his Exposition of the Psalter: ‘It is better for us to seek *the path of praise, the Scripture of God*, that we turn not aside from the way either to the right hand or to the left. *God hath praised himself that he might be properly praised by man: and because he hath designed to praise himself, therefore have men found how to praise him*. For it cannot be said to God, as it is to man, “Let not thine own mouth praise thee”. For man to praise himself is arrogance: for God to praise himself is mercy’.

Cassian (360-435 AD). who laboured in the West, particularly at Marseilles, left this testimony: '*Our Elders have not changed the ancient custom of singing psalms, but the devotions are performed in the same order as formerly, in the meetings by night*'. He continues: 'The hymns which it had been the custom in this country to sing at the end of the night vigils, were the same hymns which they sing at this day, namely, the 50th, the 62nd, the 89th, the 148th, and following psalms' (Notice that he calls the psalms 'hymns', as in Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3).

It must be admitted that there were attempts to introduce human compositions into worship, but the main culprits appear to have been the heretics, whose aim was simply to disseminate false doctrine. Bardesanes, and his son, Harmonius, both Gnostics, actually tried to replace the Psalter with one of their own! Marcion, Paul of Samosata, Arius, and Apollinarius were others who desperately tried to supplant the inspired psalms. As might have been expected, there was strong resistance to this from among the orthodox, and, in 381 AD, the Council of Laodicea issued the following decree: '*No psalms composed by private individuals nor any uncanonical books may be read in the church, but only the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments*'. This was confirmed by the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD and again at the Second Council of Braga, Portugal, in 563 AD. The latter Council decreed that '*beside the Psalms or canonical Scriptures nothing be sung in the churches*'.

These quotations, although a mere selection from the great number which could be offered, are sufficient to show that the ancient and general practice was to use David's psalms in public worship.

## **The Mediaeval Period**

This period (590-1500 AD), the darkest in Church history, witnessed the rise of all manner of corruptions in the worship of God. That said, however, it should also be stated that during these centuries the Psalms continued to enjoy a prominent place in Christian devotion.

The Eighth Council of Toledo, in 653 AD, actually laid down that 'none henceforth shall be promoted to any ecclesiastical dignity who do not perfectly know *the whole Psalter*.'

Out of the private, family, and community prayers, observed by Christians in preparation for the Lord's Day, there emerged an ordered scheme of daily worship which became known as 'The Daily Office'. The basis of the services in this Daily Office was *the Psalter* which was *chanted right through each week*. Eventually an actual book was produced, called the '*Psalterium*'. It contained the Psalms divided into different portions.

*The Psalms were sung constantly in the monasteries*. In some of them, twenty or thirty psalms were appointed for each night; in others, notably in Egypt, as many as fifty or sixty were sung during the day. One peculiar custom was to make the number of psalms correspond with the hour, singing three at the third hour, six at the sixth hour, nine at the ninth hour, and so on.

In more public worship, specific *psalms were assigned to particular occasions*: for example, Amalar of Metz, in the ninth century, tells us that in his time Psalm 95 was sung at the beginning of the Lord's Day services. Earlier sources reveal that Psalm 63 was often sung at the morning service and Psalm 141 at the evening. Yet while psalmody continued, many and various innovations began to appear in the worship of God.

Gregory, bishop of Rome (590-604 AD), had introduced professional choirs, along with a new mode of chanting, the so-called 'Gregorian chant'. And Church authorities insisted that praise be rendered in the Latin tongue, even though Latin had fallen into disuse and was no longer understood by the common people. Along with these sad changes came the use of uninspired hymns and paraphrases.

The venerable Bede, Notker, Bernard of Clairvaux, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, Jacaponus, and others, all contributed hymns of their own

composition. Some were orthodox enough: others contained and propagated the most dreadful of errors, including the worship of the host, the adoration of the material cross, and the invocation of Mary and the saints. It is true that there were protests and on the grounds that the new hymns were not taken from the sacred Scriptures, but the tide of public opinion was fast turning against the ancient usage and, as a result, human songs were regularly sung along with the divine.

Of course, there were reformers who tried to recall the Church to Scripture rule and practice. One such was Archbishop Agobard of Lyons (779-840 AD). Finding the worship of his day corrupted, he sought to amend it and, as Dr. Augustus Neander, the historian, tells us: 'In executing this task, he went on the principle of confining himself as much as possible to *scriptural expression*'. Not too surprisingly, he was attacked for so doing and accused of being an innovator!

By the end of the mediaeval period, public worship had undergone a tragic change. It was now far removed from its primitive and apostolic form.

## **The Reformation Era**

If the Reformation saw an explosion of preaching, it was no less dramatic in a tremendous revival of Psalmody.

One of Martin Luther's great concerns was to restore congregational singing to its proper place. As early as 1523 he stated his intention to produce a Psalter for the German people. He wrote: 'We intend, according to the example of the prophets and ancient fathers of the Church, to make spiritual songs for the common people, that the *Word of God* may continue among the people, if not otherwise, yet surely *in the psalms*. The following year he carried out that intention, at least in part, when he published his own metrical versions of Psalms 12, 67 and 130.

Luther was unable to conceal his enthusiasm for the Psalms. In his Preface to the Psalter, published in 1531, he wrote: '*Where will you find words more aptly chosen to express joy, than in the Psalms of praise and the Psalms of thanksgiving?*' Yet despite this love of psalmody, he was never able to shake off his affectionate regard for the Latin hymns which for centuries had been a part of Christian worship.

This partly explains why, in 1529, he published his first 'Hymn-book for the Congregation'. I say 'partly explains', because the fundamental reason why Luther opted for hymns was his rejection of the Regulative Principle. Sadly, he was willing to allow things in worship which did not have the express authority of Scripture.

Altogether, Luther wrote 37 hymns and, although some were paraphrases of Psalms (e.g. 'Ach Gott vom Himmel sieh darein' - 'Lord look down from heaven', after Psalm 12), his teaching and example meant that Lutheran praise tended towards Hymnody rather than Psalmody.

John Calvin, on the other hand, adhered more closely to Scripture and therefore restricted himself to the Psalms. 'The psalms', he writes, 'were given to King David by the Holy Spirit, so that *in singing the Psalms we can be certain that God is giving us the words as if he is singing in us to his greater glory...* We confess that in ordering our faith and religion *we wish only to follow the Holy Scriptures without the addition of human thoughts*'. He concludes: '*We shall find no songs better and more suitable for our purpose than the Psalms of David, dictated to him and made for him by the Holy Spirit.*'

While exiled in Strasburg, Calvin began work on a metrical version of the Psalms. It appears that he himself versified five psalms but he also came into possession of thirteen others written by Clement Marot, the French poet. The first edition of the Reformed Psalter in French appeared in 1539. When Calvin returned to Geneva in 1542, he persuaded Marot to settle there so that they could continue with this work. Marot died in 1544 and by that time only 49

Psalms had been versified. It fell to Theodore Beza to complete the task, and in 1562 – two years before Calvin’s death – the complete Psalter was published. It was adopted by the Genevan Church and, because Switzerland was then a temporary place of refuge for Protestants, many visitors, profoundly impressed by what they heard, returned to their own countries and introduced metrical psalm-singing to their churches.

One such refugee was John Knox. While in Geneva, ministering to the English speaking congregation, Knox had used some of the versified Psalms of Sternhold and Hopkins (which had been published in Geneva in 1556). When he returned to Scotland in 1559, he raised the question of psalmody and, as a result, in 1565, a Scottish Psalter (based on the Old English Psalter) was approved and received by the Church of Scotland. This was used until 1650, when the Westminster Assembly of Divines recommended the present (Scottish) Metrical Version for use in England, Scotland and Ireland.

There can be no doubt of Knox’s position. His ‘Book of Common Order’, first printed in Geneva in 1556, contained ‘*one-and-fifty Psalms of David in metre*’ and in the Scottish edition of 1564 nothing is found but ‘*the whole Psalmes of David in English meter*’. The Order recommended for public worship on the Lord’s Day opens with a prayer of Confession, which is followed by the people singing ‘*a Psalm all together, in a plain tune*’. All other references to praise in this Book are to the singing of Davidic Psalms.

What scenes must have been witnessed in those days! When Knox’s friend, John Dune, returned to Leith after banishment, a crowd of 2.000 people met him singing the 124th Psalm, to ‘such a pleasant tune in four parts, known to the most part of the people, that coming up the street all bareheaded till they left the kirk, with such a great sound of majestie, that it moved both themselves and all the huge multitude of beholders... with admiration and astonishment’. Psalmody became a distinctive feature of Reformation religion; and, in the sixteenth century, psalm-singer and Protestant were practically synonymous terms.



The Puritans excelled in singing Psalms. Consequently, they were nick-named 'Psalm-roaring saints' (!) 'It is an ancient and excellent ordinance of God', wrote Arthur Hildersham in 1642, 'that in his worship and service *we should sing Psalms, even David's Psalms*, and that we should sing them in that manner as may be most unto edification'. The Westminster Confession of 1645 explicitly enjoins '*the singing of psalms with grace in the heart*' (Chap. XXI, Sec V), as does the Directory when it mentions only the Psalms as suitable for singing: '*It is the duty of Christians to praise God publickly, by singing of psalms together in the congregation*'.

Separatist churches also sang the Psalms. At first, they used Sternhold and Hopkins' Version but, in 1612, Henry Ainsworth, teacher of the Separatist Church in Amsterdam, brought out his own version, which was used until 1692 when it was finally superseded by 'The Bay Psalm Book' (A version originally published in 1640, and the first book to be printed in America). I quote from the Preface of that book, said to have been written by John Cotton: "If the verses are not always so elegant as some desire or expect, let them consider that God's altar needs not our polishings; we have respected rather a plain translation, than to smooth our verses with the sweetness of any paraphrase, We have attended conscience, rather than elegance, fidelity rather than ingenuity, that so we may *sing in Zion the Lord's songs of praise, according unto his own will*, until he bid us enter into our Master's joy to sing eternal hallelujahs'.

It was the custom in these New England churches to sing the Psalms in rotation and generally to sing a whole psalm at one standing. Some are said to have taken half an hour to sing through! And for 60 years after the first churches were founded in New England, not more than ten tunes were used!

So when were hymns re-introduced? Not until 1673, when Benjamin Keach first introduced them into regular church worship.

Before concluding, we should consider the Psalms' own claims to the honour of being 'the hymn-book' of the Christian Church.

(i) The psalms are inspired by God. This makes them perfect and therefore superior to all human compositions. David, as 'the sweet psalmist of Israel', was able to say 'the spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue' (2 Samuel 23:2). Where else can we find God-glorifying praise?

(ii) While Scripture contains other 'songs', the Psalms have been collected together in a book entitled (in the Hebrew) 'Book of Praises'. This shows they are intended for use in public worship.

(iii) God's glory is man's chief end; and the Word of God is the unchanging rule which directs us how to glorify him. In that Word, God has expressly appointed the Psalms to be the vehicles of our praise. 'Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him' (Ps. 105:2).

(iv) In the Psalms, God has graciously revealed to us his beloved Son. Through them, he enables us to see his face and even to hear his voice. The Lord Jesus said: 'all things must be fulfilled, which are written... in the psalms, concerning me' (Luke 24:44); and the apostle Paul reminds us that, when we sing these praises, we are actually singing 'the word of Christ' (Col. 3:16). This makes the Psalms unique, for the same could never be said of uninspired hymns.

(v) As an ordinance, of course, Psalm-singing is a 'means of grace' and there can hardly be anything more edifying, comforting, and uplifting than the Word of God. 'Sanctify them through the truth', prayed our Lord; and he added 'thy word is truth' (John 17:17). The Psalms helped mould the characters of the Reformers, the Puritans, and the Covenanters; and if used once again, they could produce a generation of men and women 'valiant for the truth' (Jer. 9:3).

(vi) When the church sings Psalms, it declares the essential unity of the Old and New Testaments. Furthermore, it shows that the Church is one under both

dispensations, and that Christian believers are the continuing covenanted community of God's people. As Paul writes

to the Ephesians, 'Ye are... fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God (Eph. 2:19).

(vii) Psalmody will always be one of the marks of a church truly reformed – and reforming. Good king Hezekiah, in his reformation, 'commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David, and Asaph the seer' (2 Chron. 29:30). If only our modern day reformers would do the same!

## **EPILOGUE**

### **“The Root of the Matter”**

Probably most gardeners would know that the health of the plant above the ground has a significant bearing on the condition of the root under the ground. It also has a large reliance on the type of soil that the root is growing in, along with the amount of water and the good nutriments that the root is able to absorb.

It is a science, very important to the keen gardener. There appears to be six types of soil generally, and each of these has advantages and disadvantages affecting the wellbeing of the plant. For example, some drain too quickly, whereas some retain water too long and so become water-logged. A sandy soil drains easily, dries out fast for the Spring sowing and warms up quicker than a heavy clay, but it does need the help of organic fertilizer and mulching (wet straw and leaves spread around or over the plant, to keep it damp in hot weather).

All this has a huge effect on a plant, often making the difference between a good, healthy plant, and one which only just survives or does not survive at all.

The word “root” is found over forty times in the Bible. Probably, one of the best-known occurrences of the word is in the Parable of the Sower, where some

hearers of the Gospel are likened to “stony-ground” professors, who, at first, show considerable promise, but who subsequently and ultimately disappoint, because they have “no root” (Lk. 8:13). [Other references to this word may be found in Job 5:3; Proverbs 12:3,12 and Isaiah 5:24].

We particularly note Job’s use of the word. In reference to his own faith, experience and godliness, he declares, “the root of the matter is found in me (Job 19:28).

Similarly, the apostle Paul writes of the need to be “rooted and built up in him (that is, in Christ), and established in the faith” (Col. 2:6,7). Believing, he says, we direct our faith to Him, and thereafter we must draw our life and sustenance from Him. And in another epistle, he says that his prayer is that believers may be “rooted and grounded in love,...able to comprehend with all saints,,,and know...the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge” (Eph.3:17-19), meaning that they, having full confidence of Christ’s love, may be able to know it and feel it more and more, to their enrichment and establishment.

While in Spain, I saw the importance of a deep root and the strength of a root. In Central Spain, the climate is extreme, 45 degrees under a scorching sun in the summer, but the vines that grow there never seem to wilt but produce an abundance of grapes. How does that come about? A tap-root, often, in length, more than two meters, pushes down until it taps the moisture below.

Further north, I observed a tree root that had wound itself down through a rock, actually splitting that rock in two. Here is another lesson for us. Let the Christian’s root sink down deep into Christ, whatever the difficulty may be; then, he will neither wilt nor wither, but he will yield an abundance of fruit, in righteousness and true holiness, to God’s glory and to His everlasting praise.

*Steve Storey*