

ARTICLE V.

THE HYMNODY OF FOREIGN MISSIONS.

BY THE REV. JAMES H. ROSS, EAST SOMERVILLE, MASS.

AN English Baptist editor of hymnals for churches and Sabbath-schools, Rev. W. R. Stevenson, has truly said that "the hymnody of foreign missions is, as a whole, practically unknown. . . . Few have ever thought how much has been done by Christian missionaries in the translation and composition of hymns, the preparation of hymn-books, and in general, in the introduction of Christian hymnody among the various nations." There is but one allusion to the subject in the "Encyclopædia of Missions" (Funk and Wagnalls), and that relates to Japan.¹ It is due to the missionaries and to the subject, to the churches at home and to the missions in foreign lands, that the facts should be stated; for the hymn-book ranks next to the Bible or the Prayer-book in the services of the churches of all denominations, in importance and in common and constant uses. A new history and science of hymnology demand that the general theme, in all its departments, should receive more attention than it has received hitherto.

Something has been done to translate English hymns into the continental languages and to reproduce English hymnals. The "Gospel Hymns" of Moody and Sankey have been translated into many languages, and have had a history second only to their history in English-speaking countries. Rev. Lyman Abbott, D. D., in the historical introduction (p. xii) to his "Plymouth Hymnal," 1894, says: "I desire to put on record my profound sense of the obligation of the

¹ Vol. i. p. 500.

Christian church to those whose musical service has been rendered through what are known as 'The Gospel Songs.'

The noticeable fact is that all who have been without the gospel, or who have known it only in corrupted and perverted forms, are fond of hymns. The marriage of sacred poetry to sacred music, in praise of God, in expression and promotion of religious experience, and in the advancement of the kingdom of God, appeals to universal human nature. It is a subject which admits only of partial and imperfect treatment, because no known library contains a complete collection of the hymnals.

Moravian hymnody and hymnody in North America require attention first. The Moravian has been the pioneer missionary church. Moravian missions on the west coast of Greenland began in 1721. The Greenlanders obtained their hymn-book in their own language in 1772. They have had a history of hymnody for one hundred and twenty-two years. They sing well in their homes, and churches, and on their fishing-voyages. In 1770, a Moravian missionary from Greenland, Jans Haven, crossed Davis Strait to Labrador, sang to the Eskimos a Greenlandic hymn, and they were reduced from a barbaric dance to silence, by its potent spell. The present hymnal of the Eskimos consists of about nine hundred hymns, mostly modern, translated by the Rev. Theodore Bourquin, published at Stolften, Germany, 1879, and sung to the same tunes as are the English hymns. Bishop Horden, of the diocese of Moosonee, in British North America, has recently published a hymnal, containing one hundred and fifty hymns, in the language of the Cree Indians. With the exception of three or four, the translations are by himself. Bishop W. Ridley has printed at Metlakatla a collection of nineteen hymns, translated by himself and wife and Mrs. Morrison, for the use of the Tsimean Indians of British Columbia, on the north Pacific coast. J. B. McCullagh, a missionary on the upper Nias, has recently made additions to the collection of

hymns in the Niska dialect prepared by Rev. W. H. Collison. A metrical version of the twenty-third Psalm is very popular there. Messrs. W. H. Collison and C. Harrison have composed or translated some hymns which are sung by the Haidas of Queen Charlotte's Islands, off the coast of British Columbia. Rev. J. A. Hall has prepared a number of hymns for the use of the Kwa Gueth tribe, in the northern part of Vancouver's Island. The missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and of the American Missionary Association, Congregational bodies, have prepared hymnals for the Cherokee, Creek, Seneca, Ojibway, and Choctaw and Sioux Indians in the United States. Various hymns have been translated by Moravian missionaries into the language of the Moskito Indians, in Central America, but the English hymnals of various British denominations are used in Central America and in the West Indies, by the negro and Creole converts. So much is true of hymnody in North America through foreign missions.

In South America, the aborigines are taught to sing in English. For the Chinese and Indian coolies, hymn-books are imported from their native countries. A Dutch hymnal is used at Paramaribo, and a hymnal containing six hundred hymns has had a large sale among the negroes of Surinam. Little is known of the state of hymnody in the missions of the far greater part of South America.

The varieties of nationalities and dialects, akin yet different, in various lands and islands, imposes a vast work upon the missionaries in all kinds of translation. The first hymnal used in the Hawaiian Islands was published in 1823. Hymnody there is aged threescore years and eleven. Hymnody in the islands of the Pacific is in an advanced condition, on a par with the rapid progress in other particulars of the missionary movement there. The Melanesian chants are "monotonous and melancholy." The best Melanesian hymns are originals. Those who have been taught new tunes itinerate

and teach them to their fellows in the villages. The Melanesian poetry "is a kind of elevated prose cut up into divisions like verses, followed by choruses which are chiefly single syllables with no meaning." The life of Bishop Patteson by Miss Charlotte M. Yonge contains interesting references to psalms and hymns used in the language of Mota. Rev. Dr. Codrington says that the most interesting hymns in the Mota hymn-book, lately reprinted, are three by native composers, particularly one by a teacher named Clement Marau. The name is strangely suggestive of Clement Marot (1497-1544), the pioneer French hymnist.

There were in 1887 at least three hundred and fifty hymns in the Japanese language, and six Japanese Christian hymn-books. "Congregational singing is an innovation in Japan. In the Buddhist services the priests alone chant. But thousands of Japanese Christians now sing hymns heartily and even enthusiastically. The use of cabinet organs and harmoniums is common in the churches."

The hymnals of China are in the various colloquial languages. Translations and adaptations abound, owing to the deficiency of original Chinese Christian hymns and tunes. One peculiarity of Chinese poetry is that "the same rhyme is kept up from the beginning to the end of the hymn, an arrangement made easy by the nature of the language."

Over four hundred hymns exist in Siamese. A number of original Siamese hymns are by Kru Phoon, a Buddhist, who for a score of years has been employed by one of the missions as scribe and translator, and who has acquired a fair acquaintance with the letter and spirit of Christianity. Siamese music is never used in temple services. The Siamese are partial to everything in a minor key.

The Burmans regard singing as improper in worship. But the service of song has been popularized by the Christian missions.

Rev. Jacob K. Biswas, tutor in the Divinity School of

the Church Missionary Society in Northern India, has translated and composed a thousand hymns in Bengali and English metres, which have been adopted into various hymnals. The Methodist hymnal for Bengal contains fifty-one lyrics, popular in India, processional, marching, and festival hymns, usually sung to the accompaniment of a drum and cymbals.

In 1828, a small hymnal was published in Madagascar, and it was revised and enlarged in 1835, and several times thereafter. The hymns were chiefly translations of English hymns and adaptations of English tunes. Pathetic stories are told of the comfort they gave to the martyrs. Rev. S. W. Duffield conjectured that "There is a blessed home," by Rev. Sir Henry W. Baker, was the original of the hymn in the Malagasay hymnal which the martyrs sang at Favavohitva. A native Christian wrote (1847) that while burning they sang the hymn:—

"There is a blessed land
Making most happy ;
Never shall rest depart,
Nor cause of trouble come."

The conjecture is improbable, because the English hymn referred to was not published until 1861, in the hymnal of the Church of England, of which Sir Henry was one of the editors, "Hymns Ancient and Modern." The dates as given in Duffield's "English Hymns," p. 546, show the unwarrantableness of the conjecture.

Male Basutos are said to possess superior bass voices and to sing heartily. Their favorite hymn is:—

"If you ask me what is my hope,
I shall say it is Jesus."

A summary of the facts of hymnody in the history of foreign missions is that hymns have been written in, or translated into, nearly one hundred and fifty languages, and that in many missions large hymnals have been issued; that accommodation has been made to all languages in all degrees

of formation. The native hymnists are not numerous as yet. It could not be expected, reasonably, that they would be. But the best of English, German, and American hymns have been translated well enough to be helpful in services and in private life, and efficient in evangelization. One of the reports of the London Missionary Society says, that from the beginning of the mission in Madagascar "Christian hymnody has aided largely in the promotion of Christian life and knowledge among the people." Human nature essentially is the same the world over and the ages through. It may be assumed that the history of hymns under heathen, Mohammedan, Catholic, and Christian conditions will be more or less uniform, allowance being made for the variety of the conditions.

Two classes of facts deserve to be noticed:—

1. The helpfulness and consolation of hymns, to Christians and churches, under missionary conditions and influences. They have been aids to worship, reliefs under sorrow, stimulants to zeal, and encouragements to faith in immortality and the blessings and rewards of eternal life. They have been valued alike by the bearers and recipients of the glad tidings of great joy to all people. In the life renewed by translations into foreign tongues, the hymns of hymnists who died long ago are proofs that the authors, though dead, yet speak, and as powerfully as when their hymns were first written; that the good which they did and intended to do lives a perennial, enlarged, almost universal life.

"Arise, my soul, arise," by John Wesley, 1739, had a pathetic history in connection with the efforts of Dr. Richard Williams and Captain Gardiner, in December, 1850, to establish a mission in Patagonia. They and their party suffered disaster at sea which resulted in the death of all. They were seven. The hymn named was the parting hymn of John Badcock, a Cornish fisherman, who was the first to die. He asked Williams, as both lay in the narrow and leaky cabin of the "Speedwell," to sing Wesley's hymn with himself, and within

a few moments passed away. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church, even when it is poured out at sea, and the outcome of the fidelity and heroism of that company has been the realization of their plans; for, in 1872, a permanent mission was established at Ushuwia, Tierra del Fuego, with operations in Patagonia and among the Indians of Araucania. The Fuegians, moreover, in remembrance of the history, are kind to all shipwrecked crews, although Darwin in 1881 said to Admiral Sir B. J. Sullivan, that he could not have believed that all the missionaries in the world could have made the Fuegians honest.

"Jesus, lover of my soul," also by Wesley, 1740, soothed the dying hours of an Indian in British Columbia in 1886.

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me," was inserted in the *Gospel Magazine*, England, March, 1776, the year of American independence.¹ Its well-known author was Augustus M. Toplady (1740-1778). It was published only two and one-quarter years before its author's death. What a loss to the world if he had died a little younger! Rev. Dr. C. S. Pomeroy, a Presbyterian pastor, relates that when he was visiting an Armenian church in Constantinople, he saw many in tears while they were offering praise, and on inquiry, found that they were singing a Turkish translation of

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee."

The Chinese women are so anxious to accumulate merit for themselves that they will perform any labor to escape the uncertain transmigrations of the future life. They dread to be born again as mere animals. Their highest hope is to be reborn as males. In order to attain the desired result, they do anything that will accumulate merit for them. One whom

¹ Rev. Charles Robinson, D. D., in "Annotations upon Popular Hymns" (Hunt & Eaton, New York, 1893), says: "'Rock of Ages' first appeared in the English *Gospel Magazine* for October, 1775, in an article entitled 'Life a Journey'" (p. 414).

Mrs. Lucy S. Bainbridge saw, in her missionary tour of the world, had dug a well twenty-five feet deep, and ten or fifteen feet in diameter. With her hands she had excavated it, and it was only after this laborious task was accomplished that she learned of Christ and free salvation. She was an old woman of eighty, and, stretching out her crippled and aged fingers, she and the missionary traveller sang together:—

“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling.”

“Sing to the Lord with awful voice” was published by Isaac Watts (1674–1745) in 1719. It was amended by John Wesley to

“Before Jehovah’s awful throne,
Ye nations, bow with sacred joy.”

It has since been translated into many languages. In 1853–54 the fleet commanded by Commodore Perry was anchored off Japan. Religious services were held on the flag-ship, and the chaplain gave it out to be sung within sight and hearing of thousands on the shore. It was sung to the tune “Old Hundred,” and the accompaniment was by a marine band.

When Dr. Dempster, of Garrett Biblical Institute, Ill., and his wife and two companions, were on their way as missionaries to South America, they were chased for three days by pirates who refused to exchange signals with them. As the vessels drew nearer to each other, the crew and passengers of Dr. Dempster’s vessel went on deck and joined in the singing of Watts’ hymn. Then they knelt in prayer and awaited their doom. But to their amazement and delight the pursuing ship changed its course and left them. They attributed the change to the passive resistance which was offered.

“On the mountain’s top appearing” was published in the first edition (1804) of “Hymns on Various Passages of Scripture,” by Rev. Thomas Kelly (1769–1854).¹ It was

¹ Robinson’s “Annotations,” etc., p. 450, says: “In his ‘Collection of Psalms and Hymns,’ issued in Dublin, 1802.”

based on Isaiah lii. 7. A biographer of Asahel Grant, M. D., says that on the 20th of September, 1839, he reached Mosul in his expedition to the Nestorians. The Pasha of Mosul promised to protect him to the border of the country of those "mountain infidels." When Dr. Grant attained the summit, he found the mountain view indescribably grand. Never were the words of the hymn more applicable than then. The sacred herald of the gospel to the Nestorians literally was appearing "on the mountain's top." The first person that Dr. Grant met in the border village was a young man whom he had cured of blindness the previous year. This fact opened the door to him at once. The subsequent history of missions to the Nestorians is well known.

In 1830, Rev. Ray Palmer, D. D. (1808-1887), wrote

" My faith looks up to thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary."

It had a history in the life of Mrs. Layyah Barakat, a native of Syria, educated in the schools at Beirut, who afterward married and went as a teacher to Egypt. Driven out in 1882 by the insurrection of Arabi Pasha, she and her husband and child came to the United States. They landed in Philadelphia without directions or friends, but they were disclosed to friends who had known her in Syria. While here she related that she had been permitted to see the conversion of a whole family who were Maronites of Mt. Lebanon. Her mother, sixty-two years of age, 1884, had been taught the hymn in Arabic. When the news of her safety came back to Syria, the mother could send no better proof of her faith, love, and gratitude, than its language and sentiments.

"Blest be the tie that binds" was a hymn written by Rev. John Fawcett, D. D. (1739-1817), in 1772, after he had packed his goods to respond to a call from Wainsgate, Eng., to London. He and his wife sat down on their packing-cases and wept, because his reluctant people were clinging to them and urging their continued residence and ministry. The

hymn has had a nearly corresponding history in Turkey. When Mr. Coffing, a missionary at Aintab, in Armenia, set out in 1860 to explore the Taurus Mountains, he was to penetrate an entirely new and hazardous field, one hundred miles northwest of Marash. The danger was so keenly felt by his friends in Aintab, that fifteen hundred of them gathered on the roadsides, and bade farewell to him and his family in the Armenian words of Fawcett's hymn.

Dr. Coke, a missionary to India, once said to his companion, Rev. Benj. Clough, "I am dead to all but India." Clough was young, a new accession to the mission. The thought was new to him and cheered him. He began to sing a stanza of the hymn by Gerhard Tersteegen (1697-1769), translated by John Wesley: "Lo, God is here, let us adore!" The stanza which Clough sang is omitted from nearly all recent collections. It deserves quotation, for its aptness in illustrating the thought of Dr. Coke:—

"Gladly the toils of earth we leave,
Wealth, pleasure, fame, for thee alone:
To thee our will, soul, flesh, we give,
Oh, take, oh, seal them, for thine own!
Thou art the God, thou art the Lord;
Be thou by all thy works adored."

Clough sang on, and the aged Dr. Coke joined heartily with him. With this prayer and song and covenant those devoted missionaries reconsecrated themselves to their great and trying task.

Rev. Charles Robinson furnishes the following "Annotation" of Rev. Mr. Kethe's reputed version of the one hundredth Psalm, "All people that on earth do dwell":—

"A group of tourists left our shores lately for a trip through Europe and Asia. They travelled by way of Egypt. Reaching that country, they determined to see the pyramids. The massive piles of masonry seem familiar enough to those who have never been within thousands of miles of them. But to the observer they appear magnificent beyond description.

The party was largely composed of ministers of the gospel. These gathered around the base of the great pyramid. They looked toward the summit. The stone terraces towered row above row up to a dizzy height. They began the ascent. Their agility, combined with much help, brought them to the top-stone. There they sat in amazement and gazed upon the flat country of deserts. Then they drew out their pocket Bibles. The one hundredth Psalm, in long metre, was announced. To the 'Old Hundred' tune it was sung. Upon the winds of the wilderness the sacred melody floated. From this eminent station these singers sang the song of the Hebrews, and their strains melted away above the graves of their fathers, where they had lived and died in bondage. A song of praise from the great pyramid! May it be a prophecy of the good time coming, when Africa shall be filled with the music of worship, and the sweet psalms of Israel shall be heard in all her plains and mountains. Those who help the missions are hastening the day when the inhabitants of that great continent shall be a gospel choir singing the high praises of their God."

2. A second class of facts deserves to be noticed, namely, the marked efficiency of hymns in inducing conversions and promoting the work of evangelization. In Bengal, small collections of hymns by educated native Christians are very common. "Jewels of Song," by a native Christian evangelist, Modhu Sudon Sircar, is a collection containing many hymns very suitable for bazaar preaching. The Hindus are very fond of poetry, and hymnal tracts are largely employed at the missionary agencies. There is a collection of one hundred hymns by John Christian. Rev. G. D. Bates, of Allahabad, says: "Some of them I can never join in singing without moistened eyes." Selections are often sung in the streets. The Hindu Kirttan is a musical entertainment in which the services of some god are celebrated with music, instrumental and vocal. In 1862, Mr. Krishnaraw and others Christianized the Kirt-

tan. They held it in Ahmednagar and neighboring villages. It was popular at once. The first one occupied about two hours. It was conducted by a leader and a quintette of Christian singers. The subject was announced, and a chorus followed. The words of the chorus became the text of an exhortation, in a musical tone, preparing the way for another chorus. The instruments were exclusively Hindu. Thus was shown the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove.

One historian of this subject says: "Many interesting facts might be related illustrative of the value of hymnody as an evangelistic agency." The Rev. Matthew Cranswick, a Wesleyan missionary in the West Indies, says: "I have a record of upward of two hundred persons, young and old, who received the most direct evidence of the forgiveness of their sins while singing Wesley's hymn, 'Arise, my soul, arise,' at different times, at various periods. The conversion of the greater number of these persons took place while I was a missionary abroad."

It does not make much difference whether prose or poetry, preaching or prayer, be the agency of conversion, if conversions are only secured. Inasmuch as sacred poetry in hymnal forms has been used so often and so efficiently in the providence of God, to accomplish his purposes; we, the members of Christ and of the churches, at home and abroad, ought not to do less than to honor in history and services what he himself has honored. We need to remember incessantly the line of holy and quaint George Herbert: "A verse may find him who a sermon flies."

[The author would be glad of the co-operation of secretaries, missionaries, and others in the completion of his studies introduced in this article. Communications may be addressed to him at the Congregational Library, Boston, Mass. Any literature furnished him will be deposited in such hymnological library as seems best fitted to further the objects of his investigation.—ED.]