

**SPIRITUAL SONGS, OR SONGS
OF PRAISE TO ALMIGHTY GOD,
UPON SEVERAL OCCASIONS;
PENITENTIAL CRIES**

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Spiritual Songs, or Songs of Praise to Almighty God, upon Several Occasions; Penitential Cries
by John Mason & Thomas Shepherd

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JOHN MASON & THOMAS SHEPHERD

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Spiritual Songs,
OR
Songs of Praise
TO
ALMIGHTY GOD,

UPON SEVERAL OCCASIONS,

BY THE

REV. JOHN MASON, M.A.,
Rector of Water-Stratford, Buckingham.

AND

Penitential Cries,

BY THE

REV. THOMAS SHEPHERD, M.A.,
Minister of Braintree, Essex.

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Uniform with this Volume.

HOSANNAH to the SON of DAVID, or Hymns of Praise to GOD, for our glorious Redemption by CHRIST, pp. 48, *Bristol*, 1759.

An ELEGY on the REVEREND MR. G. WHITEFIELD, A.M., Chaplain to the Right Honourable COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON, who died September 30th, 1770, in Newbury, in New England, presented to Her Ladyship by William Williams, pp. 12, *Carmarthen*, 1771.

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS, or Hymns of Praise to GOD and the LAMB, pp. 76, *Carmarthen*, 1772.—All by WILLIAM WILLIAMS (*of Pantycelyn, Carmarthen*): with Biographical Sketch by the Rev. Edward Morgan, A.M., Vicar of *Syston, Leicestershire*, Author of "Williams's Life," &c., in one volume, 12mo, cloth, 4s.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

"We have been anxiously waiting for a long time for some Welshman to undertake the task of presenting his countrymen, as well as his neighbours, the English, with a new edition of old Williams's English Hymns, but until recently in vain.

"We have it now however laid before us; the volume contains, at least it professes to contain, the whole of the Hymns of the sweet Songster of Wales.

"The Hosannah was published by the Author in the year 1759, a century ago: at that period Mr. Williams had only published one of his Welsh Hymn-Books—the Alleluia—some of the English Hymns in the Hosannah are translations from the Welsh Hymn-Book just named: but by far the greater portion are original, and on new subjects.

"The other work in this volume, "Gloria in Excelsis," was composed at the request of Lady Huntingdon, for the service of the Orphan-House built by Mr. Whitefield in Georgia in America, this was printed in Carmarthen in 1772.

"The present edition has been been issued by Mr. Daniel Sedgwick, Bookseller, Sun-Street, London, and is a fac-simile of the originals published by Mr. Williams himself; the Rev. Edward Morgan, of Syston, Leicestershire, has contributed some notes to the work, with a brief review of the Life of the Author. Some of Williams's hymns are as well known as those of Watts or Cowper, and although the Author has been rather negligent in his language, owing doubtless to his lack of practice in the English, which makes his hymns appear more rugged and less refined than could have been desired, in order to make them acceptable amongst the highly cultivated English critics, yet no one who has felt the corruption of his own heart and acquainted with the workings of faith in the Redeemer, can read them without heartfelt rejoicing, and value them as suitable medicine for pouring out his tenderest feelings—consecrated in words which incline us to consider them almost inspired—and so apposite as to make us believe they were intended for our own individual case."—Translated from the "*Traethodydd*," March, 1859.

"Williams was one of the first preachers among the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists, and extensively popular as an Author of Welsh hymns, among which he first published that very general favourite, "Guide me, O thou great Jehovah." His hymns having been for many years exceedingly scarce, Mr. Sedgwick has been induced to reprint them; and the curious in such matters will doubtless thank him, and add this volume to their respective collections."—*Watchman*, January 26th, 1859.

"This is the first of a Series which it is intended to publish, of the best hymns of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in the exact words of their Authors. The idea is a good one; for our best hymns have been sadly mutilated and spoiled."—*Notes and Queries*, February 5th, 1859.

"This is a volume of considerable interest, more especially to those who knew the good and able man whose name is inscribed on the title-page. Mr. Williams was a moral hero in his day and generation, a Clergyman of distinguished talents and high character, who spent seventy-four years in traversing this vale of tears. The Rev. Mr. Morgan, Vicar of Syston, has materially added to the value of the book by his interesting introductory Essay."—*Christian Witness*, February, 1859.

"Mr. Williams was born in 1717, and was ordained deacon in 1740; but, being refused priest's orders, he joined the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist body, and died in 1791. He appears to have been a most zealous man. He was the author of two well-known hymns, one beginning, "O'er those gloomy hills of darkness," the other, "Guide me, O thou great Jehovah." The volume before us is a reprint of two of Mr. Williams's works, which appeared in 1759 and 1772. The hymns they contain are devotional and impassioned; and it seems that the productions of his muse have been remarkably popular in the principality. In his own language no doubt they possessed considerable merit; but he was not sufficiently acquainted with English to express himself in flowing verse. The two hymns which we first mentioned were composed in Welsh, and were doubtless (especially the last) translated into English by another hand. Very few could be introduced into our psalmody; yet we are pleased at the republication of them, and think that this little volume will form an interesting study to the devout mind."—*Church of England Magazine*, March 31st, 1859.

"This volume of hymns was composed by a remarkable character who lived in North Wales during the latter part of the last century, and for at least forty-five years travelled forty or fifty miles every week, preaching, mostly in Welsh, all through the Principality. He chiefly wrote in Welsh, in which he excelled as an Author; but the work before us he composed in English. That not being his native tongue, there is at times a stiffness apparent in his compositions; and yet there is a force and originality breathing through his uncouth language, which show that he knew and felt what he said, and that no mercenary motive or thirst for human praise moved his pen, but that he wrote for the glory of God and the good of his people. A well-known hymn of his begins, "O'er those gloomy hills of darkness," and may be found in most collections."—*Gospel Standard*, June, 1859.

INTRODUCTION.

THIS volume contains the compositions of two kindred spirits, the *Songs of Praise* of the Rev. John Mason, and the *Penitential Cries* of the Rev. Thomas Shepherd. The first edition of the former was published in the year 1683, while the latter were not added till 1692. But having since then, in union, profited, delighted, and edified many earnest christians—as the many editions of this anonymously published volume prove—the publisher would not separate them in this edition—carefully reprinted from the fourth, *i.e.* the last edition corrected by Mr. Mason—though he has assigned to each author his own share in the joint-publication; omitting the Metrical Version of the Canticles, and the Sacred Poem on Dives and Lazarus, which had hitherto formed a portion of the volume, and adding one of the minor poems written on special occasions, and published with a short account of the life and death of Mr. J. Mason, by John Dunton, in 1694.

The few particulars which could be gleaned from the several accounts of the author of the *Songs of Praise*, show that the REV. JOHN MASON, M.A., attended the school at Strixton, in Northamptonshire, removed thence to Clare Hall, Cambridge, and began his ministry as curate to the Rev. Mr. Sawyer, at Isham in Northamptonshire. On October 31st, 1668, he was presented to the vicarage of Stanton-Bury, and subsequently—January 28th, 1674—to the rectory of Water-Stratford, in the county of Buckingham, where he departed this life in the year 1694.

The testimony of his contemporaries, and his

writings in prose and poetry, prove him to have been a man of considerable learning, fervent spirit, genuine zeal, and great industry. He was a popular preacher, who preached with much earnestness, and used great plainness of speech. His warm and experimental preaching in the pulpit was rendered still more impressive by his unaffected piety, great humility, and exemplary walk, and many were, therefore, the seals of his ministry. "He was a light in the pulpit, and a pattern out of it." His whole conversation testified that he had laid "hold upon the Lord Jesus Christ by a true and lively faith," breathed a truly catholic spirit, and aimed at the spiritual prosperity of all his parishioners. Six times every day he wrestled with the Lord in prayer; and it was this practice of giving himself continually to prayer, that sustained him in his abundant labours, and rendered his ministry so eminently useful. The Rev. Henry Maurice, Rector of Tyringham, Bucks, who wrote "An impartial Account of Mr. John Mason, and his Sentiments," says, "He was a person of as great devotion as ever I met with, and his main aim was to make all he conversed with to be religious. He was not only true and just, but kind and charitable; very affable in his carriage, meek in his converse, and never over earnest but (where he thought he could not exceed) for God." The Rev. Mr. Hammet, the successor of Mr. Mason at Stanton-Bury, adds: "My acquaintance with Mr. Mason I have esteemed one of the greatest mercies I ever received. His affections were so fervent, and his zeal so great, that as they were the comfort, so they were the admiration of those that feared God and lived near him." Mr. Baxter calls him "the Glory of the Church of England," and says: "The frame of his spirit was so heavenly, his deportment so humble and obliging, his discourse of spiritual things, and little else could we

hear from him, so weighty, with such apt words and delightful air, that it charmed all that had any spiritual relish, and was not burdensome to others, as discourses of that nature have been from other ministers."

Towards the close of his life, he entertained strange and extravagant notions respecting the personal reign of Christ on earth, and the resurrection from among the dead; and his unguarded expressions, especially in a discourse, entitled "The Midnight Cry," induced many, even after his death, to expect the glorious appearing of Christ to judge the world at Water-Stratford. Mr. Mason himself testified to the last that he had seen the Lord, and that it was time for this nation to tremble, and for Christians to trim their lamps. His last words were: "I am full of the loving-kindness of the Lord."

Of his publications we notice the following:

1. The "Songs of Praise to Almighty God, upon several occasions, together with the Song of Songs, which is Solomon's, first turned, then paraphrased in English Verse, with an addition of a Sacred Poem on Dives and Lazarus, to which is added Penitential Cries."* This volume, which has passed through twenty editions, contains most of his poems, and these are remarkable for pure and sound devotion. James Montgomery, the poet, says respecting them: "The style (of the author) is a middle tint between the raw colouring of Quarles, and the day-light clearness of Watts. His talent is equally poised between both, having more vigour but less versatility than that of either his forerunner, or his successor. Dr. Watts, Mr. Pope, and the Wesleys, appear to have been familiar with the contents of this volume, sundry lines and phrases in verses of theirs being evidently borrowed from passages in it."

* Of these he only composed the first six, and the 86th Psalm, which, through inadvertance, have been ranged under the general title of *Songs of Praise*, pp. 49 to 51.