

**THE HYMN-BOOK OF THE
CHURCH; OR, THE
GROWTH OF THE PSALTER**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649188291

The hymn-book of the Church; or, The growth of the Psalter by Frances Arnold-Forster

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

FRANCES ARNOLD-FORSTER

**THE HYMN-BOOK OF THE
CHURCH; OR, THE
GROWTH OF THE PSALTER**

D.P.P.
Comment. (O.T.)
Psalms
A.

THE HYMN-BOOK OF THE CHURCH

OR

THE GROWTH OF THE PSALTER

BY

FRANCES ARNOLD-FORSTER, S.T.H.

161867.
16.5.21

LONDON

SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE

NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1920

"The sum of our words is, HE IS ALL."

"How shall we have strength to glorify him?
When ye glorify him, exalt him as much as ye can;
For even yet will he exceed;
And when ye exalt him, put forth your full strength:
Be not weary, for ye will never attain."

SIRACH xlviii.

PREFACE

THIS book, it should be clearly understood, is not to be looked upon as a commentary on the Psalms. Its claim is a far humbler one—namely, that it is an attempt to place the average reader of the Psalms in a better position for the profitable study and understanding of existing commentaries, written by scholars and past-masters of the subject.

The need for some such preparatory book was brought home to the writer some years ago through the experiences gained in a Study Circle on the Book of Psalms. The members of it were educated women, all of them thoroughly familiar with the Prayer-Book Text of the Psalter, but the majority of them had no knowledge at all of the history of the Book, or of the results of present-day scholarship.

The experiment was suggested of tracing out the analogy between the work of compiling an English Hymnal, intended for both public and private use, and the gradual growth of the Jewish Hymn-Book, the one true standard "Hymn-Book of the Church." This method threw light on the *literary history* of the Psalms. It helped to explain alterations and additions in the text, and raised various points of discussion concerning authorship.

In the freedom of informal talk it was easy to pass from

questions of History and Literature, and to bring out into daylight other questions, of another order—half-recognized stumbling-blocks that were silently troubling the mind of one and another. Such stumbling-blocks proved to be of very different kinds. Chief among them was a resentment against the spirit of vindictiveness on the one hand, and of self-satisfaction on the other, found in certain Psalms, and tacitly felt to be inconsistent with the character of writings divinely inspired. A wholly different kind of perplexity lay in the question, How far is "the Christ" plainly "fore-told" in the Psalms?

It is needless to say that no difficulty was brought forward which has not been handled over and over again by reverent-minded and scholarly writers and preachers who have brought to the task the best powers of their minds and the fullness of their first-hand knowledge. Yet it may perhaps be justly pleaded that their work needs translation into a simpler language if it is to meet the needs of wholly untrained lovers of the Psalter; and such "untrained" lovers are nowhere more largely to be found than among our most constant church-goers, who are accustomed to join in the monthly recitation of the entire Psalter, year in, year out, till the familiar words have become wellnigh a part of themselves—and yet the familiar puzzles still remain unexplained, and still, therefore, continue to strike their jarring note.

It will perhaps be objected that in the following pages there is a certain amount of repetition, but this, it may be owned, is not wholly accidental. The writer has had in

mind throughout, the memory of actual difficulties and perplexities—imperfectly expressed, and still more imperfectly met—in that Study Circle of long ago, and has therefore sought in this book to foreshadow in the Preface and to sum up in the Conclusion certain of these constantly recurring difficulties, and to emphasize certain lines of interpretation and application (worked out more at length in the intervening chapters), in the earnest hope that some readers may be helped to feel afresh the inspired power of the Psalms to fit “the new needs” of each generation.

On many of the minor points touched upon in this book there are very considerable differences of opinion among experts, and the writer is painfully conscious that since the book has no claim to be original, but is only the outcome of gleanings from the labours of first-hand authorities, it may at times be found guilty of being inconsistent with itself. Yet it is hoped that even this fault may not wholly invalidate its usefulness as a stepping-stone to better help, for the very aim and object of the whole undertaking has been to show that the value of the Book of Psalms, for us Christians in this twentieth century, does not depend on any one theory of authorship or transmission, or even of inspiration.

It is practically certain that among the changes directly or indirectly due to the War we shall find changes in our authorized public use of the Psalter—changes that will bring both loss and gain. In our Sunday services we shall be at liberty to use specially appointed Psalms, as we now

have specially appointed Lessons. On week-days we shall no longer in our monthly course recite the entire Psalter, for a very small number of Psalms—among them the 58th, with its cruel and vengeful words—will no longer be made use of in public worship, and it is probable that we shall no longer be tried by having to join in the un-Christlike prayers that mar the tender beauty of the 109th Psalm. All this will be for our gain, and yet there must needs be a certain loss, in the inevitable lessening of our familiarity with the Psalter as a whole.

But though they may no longer be forced upon our attention, the old difficulties still remain in the Psalms, and questions of many sorts must of necessity arise in our minds as day after day we make use of this most time-honoured of all Hymn-Books, and it behoves each one of us to try—by thought and pains and by the best helps within reach—to find our own answer. Of the Psalms, no less than of the prophetic writings, our Lord declared that they witnessed concerning himself (*cp.* Luke 24, 27 with 24, 44); and therefore it is the bounden duty of each one of us, who so continually make use of these Psalms, to seek to understand in what sense the Psalmists too—like Moses and Isaiah—can be said to “speak” of our blessed Lord and Master (*cp.* John 12, 41).

Only, all this we can never even hope to apprehend unless we set ourselves to use patiently both the human and the Divine helps that are within our reach. We must not rest content with mere verbal familiarity, blessed gift though it be. We must *study* the Psalms, but not the Psalms alone.

We must work in other parts of what S. Leo the Great calls "the broad fields of Holy Scripture," seeking out for ourselves the way in which the broken lights vouchsafed to Psalmist and Prophet shine out in their fullness to those who, like S. Peter and the Evangelists, had already recognized and confessed the Divine glory of Jesus of Nazareth.

In thus studying the Psalms we need not be afraid to open our minds to fresh teaching as to their history and purpose and authorship. And if needs be, we must have the courage and faith and humility to give up, at the call of Truth, traditional and dear beliefs.

But we must never rest content with our study of the Psalms until some breath of their innermost spirit has reached us, till we too have experienced something of that "thirst" for God, that "very fervent desire" for himself, and his will and his honour, that in one Psalm after another lifts the soul heavenward. It would be no very difficult task to trace out in the Psalter each one of our Saviour's beatitudes, with its promised reward, but foremost, surely, among the number would stand out the blessedness of those who "hunger and thirst" (*e.g.*, 42, 1; 63, 1; 119, 81, 131; 143, 6); who yearn to be led ever onwards (25, 4, 5), and to be taught the things that they know not—crying out, as in the ninefold petition of the 119th Psalm, "*Teach me.*" And here, too, we are shown the reward of such a thirst and such a desire: "He satisfieth the longing soul, and the hungry soul he filleth with good" (107, 9). But above all else we must ask our Master to "open" to us the depths of these ancient Hymns, and to be to us, as to his disciples