

# **THE STORY OF THE PSALMS**

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The Story of the Psalms by Henry Van Dyke

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**HENRY VAN DYKE**

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OF THE PSALMS**



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THE  
STORY OF THE PSALMS

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BY

HENRY VAN DYKE, D. D.

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NEW YORK  
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS  
1913

To  
MY FATHER,  
WHO WAS MY FIRST TEACHER,  
AND IS MY FAITHFUL FRIEND,  
This Book is Dedicated  
IN GRATEFUL AFFECTION.

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## PREFACE

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THERE is nothing truly great or lasting in literature which is not, in the broadest and deepest sense, humane.

The best poetry is that which comes closest to the common experience of mankind, — gives form and colour to the feelings which enter every heart, — it is “the blossom and fragrance of all human knowledge, human thoughts, human passions, emotions, language.” Thus it becomes true, as Wordsworth has said, that the poet is “the rock of defence of human nature, an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love.”

It seems to me that we may discern in this truth, at least in part, one secret of the vitality and power of the Bible. There is no other book which lies so near to the great throbbing heart of the world. Its humanity is no less manifest, no less potent, than its divinity. There is life in it, and life is always interesting.

We need to be on our guard against any method of using or interpreting these Scriptures which would put them far away from us, or make them shadowy and unreal. When they are regarded chiefly as a collection of mystical charms, a mine where we may dig for

Source of greatness  
in literature

Greatness of Books



doctrines, or a compilation of forms of sound words, their best influence is lost. A desiccated Bible will have small power with anybody except the superstitious.

We ought to be grateful that it did not fall down from heaven like the fabulous statue of Diana of the Ephesians; nor was it whispered into any man's ear by a pigeon after the fashion in which Mahomet said that he received the Koran; but God caused it to grow upon the earth, and to draw into itself all that was noblest and purest in many generations of our fellow-men. We ought to remember that there is not a book in it, and hardly a chapter, the threads of which are not interwoven with the actual experience of a human life.

It is in this spirit that I have tried to write the story of some of the psalms. My desire has been to bring these ancient and sacred poems into close connection with the lives of the men who wrote them,—men of like passions, and sins, and trials, and hopes, and aspirations, with ourselves. To do this will not lessen our reverence for the psalms, and it may increase our love. For it will bring them home to us and give them the touch of reality. It will help us to understand that the depths of our nature, like the profundities of the ocean, are unchanged by the tides and tempests which play upon the surface, and that true religion is the same in every man and in every age.

NEW YORK CITY, June, 1887.

we are  
the same despite  
the superficialities

## A LIST OF BOOKS.

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IN 1723 a painful scholar counted six hundred and thirty commentaries upon the Psalms. Since that time many more have been added. It has not seemed necessary for me to read all of these at present ; but it may be profitable to give a short list of those books which I have found most helpful, and it will certainly be proper to acknowledge in this place my indebtedness to them.<sup>1</sup>

J. J. STEWART PEROWNE : *The Book of Psalms*. London : 1883. 2 vols.

FRANZ DELITZSCH : *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*. Clark's Foreign Theological Library. Edinburgh : 1884. 3 vols.

G. HEINRICH A. V. EWALD : *Commentary on the Psalms*. London : Williams and Norgate : 1880. 2 vols.

JAMES G. MURPHY : *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*. Andover : Warren P. Draper : 1875.

F. C. COOK, Canon of Exeter : *The Book of Psalms*. In the *Speaker's Commentary*, vol. iv. New York : Scribners : 1874.

WILLIAM ALEXANDER, Bishop of Derry : *The Witness of the Psalms to Christ*. New York : E. P. Dutton : 1877.

THOMAS CHALMERS MURRAY : *The Origin and Growth of the Psalms*. New York : Scribners : 1880.

MARVIN R. VINCENT : *Gates into the Psalm Country*. New York : Scribners : 1883.

ALEXANDER MACLAREN : *The Life of David*. London : Macmillan : 1880.

SAMUEL COX : *The Pilgrim Psalms*. London : 1874.

ARTHUR PENRHYN STANLEY : *History of the Jewish Church*. New York : Scribners : 1874. 3 vols.

C. A. BRIGGS : *Messianic Prophecy*. New York : Scribners : 1886.

<sup>1</sup> The translation which I have followed, with few exceptions, is that of the Revised Version.

