

DAVID'S HARP IN SONG AND STORY

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David's Harp in Song and Story by Joseph Waddell Clokey & W. J. Robinson

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JOSEPH WADDELL CLOKEY & W. J. ROBINSON

DAVID'S HARP IN SONG AND STORY

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IN

SONG AND STORY,

BY

JOSEPH WADDELL CLOKEY, D. D.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

W. J. ROBINSON, D. D.

"The Harp the Hebrew minstrel swept,
The King of Men, the loved of Heaven,
Which Music hallow'd while she wept
O'er tones her heart of hearts had given,
Redoubled be her tears, its chords are riven !
It soften'd men of iron mold,
It gave them virtues not their own ;
No ear so dull, no soul so cold,
That felt not, fired not to the tone,
Thil David's lyre grew mightier than his throne."
—Byron.

PITTSBURGH:
UNITED PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION,
83 AND 85 NINTH STREET,
1896

DEDICATION.

To the memory of my Sainted Parents is dedicated this History of the Bible Psalms, which supplied for their lifetime the sole material of their praise, both in their church and home. If they are now, in the other life, in conscious touch with us in this, it will be a pleasant thought to them to know that they have children in earth who will never cease to be grateful to them that they led their feet in child-life by the green pastures and still waters of a Holy Bible and a Holy Psalmody.

New Albany, Ind.

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PREFACE.

At one of the last sessions of the Presbyterian General Assembly held in Pittsburg in the month of May, the following communication was read by the stated clerk :

“To the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, now in session in Pittsburg :

“Dear Fathers and Brethren—The undersigned beg leave to state that they are chairmen of committees appointed by the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian church now in this city and by the synod of the Reformed Presbyterian church, respectively, for the purpose of securing a metrical version of the Book of Psalms which will be correct and elegant and conform to the present canons of literary taste in the English tongue. The object proposed is not to commit any body of Christians to the use of such book in whole or in part when completed, but to secure, if possible, a metrical translation of the Psalter of such excellence as will commend it to the taste and judgment of all who may desire to use the Psalms in praise, and as will secure it a place in the hymnody of all the churches.

“It is believed that the material for such a version is already in hand and is to be found in the many versions and the many manuals of the churches, as also in many separate individual renderings. Thus, while new renderings would not be excluded from consideration, the proposed work would be chiefly that of collation, selection and compilation of metrical translations now in existence.

“We are instructed by the bodies which we represent to solicit the co-operation in this revision of other bodies of Christians which have authorized in their standards the use of the Psalms in praise.

“We therefore request this General Assembly, representing the largest and most influential of the Presbyterian bodies, to consider this proposal favorably and to appoint a committee to co-operate in this work, being assured that your example in so doing would be readily followed by all the Reformed churches.

“W. J. ROBINSON,

“Chair. Com. United Presbyterians.

“W. J. COLEMAN,

“Chair. Com. Reformed Presbyterians.”

May 27, 1895.

The members of the Assembly at the time, perhaps, looked on a favorable response to this communication more in the light of a courtesy than anything else, and so appointed a corresponding committee. The question of her Psalmody had not been one of the agitated topics of the church, and few, if any, of the delegates felt that here was a proposition of serious import. The falling of the communication among such a body intensely stirred by questions connected with seminary control, was like the dropping of a leaf in a tempest, yet, it was a leaf borne by a dove to the ark that told of the subsidence of the flood, and the reappearing of the forests and the soil that had been for months covered from sight. So may not this communication from two bodies of Presbyterians to a third, by a prophetic leaf, omening such a settling down of denominational agitations as will bring to the surface, as never before, the Psalms of the Bible, which have been so often obscured amid the contentions over other important affairs. To this united committee from these three leading bodies of Christians this little work goes with its silent plea. It is sent to you that the Psalms may tell their own story. They come in no spirit of dispute; they do not propose to take issue with you on any of the questions of your Psalmody over which you conscientiously differ. At present they only plead for greater prominence in the praises of Zion. We are part of God's Inspired Word, they say to you, sent down from Heaven through the movings of the Holy Spirit that we may be sung in the praises of God's people. For more than twenty-five centuries we have been in the worship of the church, and what we have done in all these long ages, in comforting and inspiring the people of God, we are still capable of doing for the ages to come. Are you, and are your difficulties and dangers, and experiences, so different from your fathers who loved us, that you can afford to consign us to an obscure corner in your Books of Song! We claim a high place in your material of praise. Read our story and consider our plea.

INTRODUCTION.

The Book of Psalms is a unique portion of the Inspired volume. While it is vitally, as well as structurally, a part of the sacred Book, breathing the same spirit, and throbbing with the pulsations of the same divine life which animates the whole, yet in its structure, matter, style and tone, it differs from all the other books of the Bible. As another has well said, "It is not the history of God's people, or of God's ways with them, nor is it the inculcation of positive doctrines or duties, nor the formal prophetic announcement of coming events. These are in the Psalms, it is true, but only in a subordinate way. History, prophecy, providence, doctrine and law are all here, but these form nothing more than the frame around which the Spirit of God has built the praise, prayer and adoration of the Lord's people." Dr. Addison Alexander, in his learned exegetical Commentary on the Psalms, points out the following distinctive characteristics of the book: "These hundred and fifty independent pieces, different as they are, have this in common, that they are all poetical, not merely imaginative and expressive of feeling, but stamped externally with that peculiar character of parallelism which distinguishes the higher style of Hebrew composition from ordinary prose. A still more marked resemblance is that they are all not only poetical, but lyrical, i. e., songs, poems intended to be sung, and with musical accompaniment. Thirdly, they are all religious lyrics, even those which seem at first sight the most secular in theme and spirit, but which are all found on inquiry to be strongly expressive of religious feeling. In the fourth place, they are all ecclesiastical lyrics, Psalms or Hymns, intended to be permanently used in public worship, not excepting those which bear the clearest impress of original connection with the social, domestic or personal relations and experiences of the writers." Like every other portion of the Sacred Volume, the Book of Psalms is the Word of God, the expression of the Divine mind toward sinful men, "The revelation of the will of God for human salvation," and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." But unlike every other portion of the Volume, in its structure, matter, style and form, it seems to be specially adapted to the use of formal praise and worship. It is a book complete in itself. It depends for its interpretation, and for its highest uses, upon every other part of the Word, yet it stands out with a recognized prominence that distinguishes it as "the Divinest of these Divine Words." In its themes

it compasses the whole range of revealed truth. It opens the door into the very inner sanctuary of the Divine mind. It lays bare the secrets of the human heart. It sweeps every chord in the entire gamut of human feeling, and attunes its voice to all the varying moods, and changing experiences, which make up the spiritual life of the child of God on earth. "There," says Luther, "you look right down into the heart of saints, and behold all manner of joys and joyous hearts toward God and his love springing lustily into life! Again, you look into the heart of saints as into death and hell! How gloomy and dark their mournful visions of God." What notes of joy, outbursts of gladness and songs of praise echo and re-echo through this wonderful book! And yet how much of the song is modulated to the expression of grief and sorrow. "The Book is a 'Psalm of Life'", and it sings in both the major and minor keys, because human life has both joys and sorrows. What a mirror it is of the human heart burdened with sin, redeemed by grace, struggling against ten thousand enemies within and without, helpless in itself, laying hold upon the divine strength, in the depths to-day, and crying out in fear and anguish on the Rock to-morrow, and shouting the songs of deliverance, now wailing the cry of utter despair, and anon rising exultant on the wings of hope, "faint, yet pursuing!" It is no wonder that the true child of God finds the Book of Psalms the very manual of his spiritual life. Though written ages before the fuller revelation of the Gospel had been given, this Book is irradiated with the brightest beams of Gospel light. It was rich and full as the honey-comb to the Old Testament saint, but it has a richer fulness and a sweeter taste to him who has entered most largely into "the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ." Spurgeon writes in the Preface to the last volume of "The Treasury of David," as the testimony of his experience in the study of the Book, "The Book of Psalms instructs us in the use of wings as well as words; it sets us both mounting and singing. Often have I ceased my commenting upon the text, that I might rise with the Psalm, and gaze upon the visions of God." And what multitudes of the best and holiest of the followers of Jesus have found in this Book, the songs which have made melody "in the house of their pilgrimage!" Well may the celebrated Tholuck say, "Songs, which like the Psalms have stood the test of three thousand years, contain a germ for eternity." And yet another distinction belongs to this Book. These songs, so rich, full and complete in all the material for the worship of God, so adapted in their clear and graphic expression of all the emotions and experiences of true piety, to the purposes of worship, so adequate to all the uses of worship, are declared by their very style and structure to have been designed by their Author, for the service of worship. This is the conclusion to which all scholarly study of the Book invariably leads. Few,