

# The Herald Of Christ's Kingdom

*July/August 1999*

## The Psalms

### EDITOR'S JOURNAL

*And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.—Luke 24:44*

The Book of Psalms is one of the best-loved books of the Bible. This was as true in Jesus' day as it is today. There are more quotations in the New Testament from the Book of Psalms than any other book. Our Lord and the apostles quoted or referred to specific psalms at least 70 times. (Isaiah with 55 references is in second place.)

The psalms are Hebrew poetry. In English we generally expect poems to rhyme and to have a kind of beat or rhythm. Generally poems are difficult to translate from one language to another while preserving either of these characteristics because equivalent words in two languages usually do not rhyme. But the vivid parallel repetition of thoughts and ideas which formed the basis of the Hebrew poetic form does translate well. Note the poetic nature of these words: "He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses" (Psalm 33:7).

As difficult as it is to write poetry in any language, at times the psalmist gave himself artificial constraints. Psalms 25 and 34 each contain 22 lines beginning with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Psalm 119 consists of eight lines beginning with the Hebrew letter *aleph* (a), followed by eight lines beginning with the Hebrew letter *beth* (b), and so on through all 22 letters of the alphabet. Centuries ago people appreciated the psalms so much that many memorized all of them. This would be particularly important in our Lord's day when memory had to substitute for easy access to books.

The psalms were contained in different books prior to being combined into a single book as we have them today. Some Bibles preserve this separation by identifying these "books" as Psalms 1-41, 42-72, 73-89, 90-106, and 107-150. We have no way of knowing exactly how they were numbered in our Lord's day since quotations typically take the form of "one in a certain place testified, saying" (Hebrews 2:6). The only exception is Acts 13:33 where the quotation is attributed to the "second psalm" which is indeed Psalm 2 in our Bibles.

The psalms were as important to the Lord and the disciples as the law and the prophets. Since many of the psalms were sung, one might erroneously say they used their hymns to prove their beliefs. Although we would never do such a thing today, these were not ordinary "hymns." They were inspired by God through his holy spirit. Jesus' own words in Luke 24:44 make it clear that the psalms were prophetic and that his mission was to fulfil what was written of him there.

The author of the book of Hebrews uses several psalms to prove the superiority of God's son. The book begins: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." Then without specifically stating where he gets his next thoughts, proofs lifted from the psalms begin to be articulated:

Verse 5: "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" (See Psalm 2:7.)

Verse 7: "Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire." (See Psalm 104:4.)

Verses 8, 9: "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." (See Psalm 45:6,7)

Verses 10-12: "And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. (See Psalm 102:25-27.)

Verse 13: "But to which of the angels said he at any times, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?" (See Psalm 110:1.)

Later in the book, the superiority of the priesthood established by our Lord compared to the priesthood of Aaron is undoubtedly inspired by the words of Psalm 110:4, "The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

## **Praise**

The Book of Psalms in the original Hebrew is called "Praises." Indeed praise is a good one-word description of the psalms. The English word in its various forms appears more times in the Book of Psalms than in all other books of the Bible combined. Praise for God and his works shines through which is why they must have been such a pleasure to sing. Did our Lord sing? Yes, he did. On the night of the last supper we read, "When they had

sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives" (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26). Undoubtedly the "hymn" they sang was a psalm.

An excellent example of praise can be found in the last five psalms, called the "Hallelujah Psalms" because all begin and end with this word (which is translated "Praise ye the Lord" in the King James Version). Here are the first five verses of Psalm 148:

"Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights. Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created."

Praise is so appropriate for the people of God. "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Hebrews 13:15).

### **A Look at This Issue**

This issue of **THE HERALD** is devoted to the Book of Psalms. We begin with an examination of the structure of the book. As Moses gave the nation the five books of the law, we have in the psalms another five-fold division. The article "God's Poem" compares and contrasts each of these five divisions with the first five books of the Bible. Space considerations preclude an exhaustive exposition for all five, though the "Exodus" section is explored in some detail.

Next we look at Psalm 23, perhaps the best known psalm of all. How amazing that the Hebrew of this psalm even in translation has become so beloved by people who may never have even seen a sheep. It is almost transcendent in its description of the protective qualities of our Master. Books have been devoted to this single psalm.

"Early Stages of the Kingdom Rule" looks at the psalms for their importance as prophecy, specifically as it concerns the kingdom of our Lord and the times in which we are now living. Through the testimony of the psalms we have a glorious preview of the kingdom when God will be exalted in all the earth.

Where did Jesus learn about his mission? Without question one source was the Book of Psalms. "Communing with God" shows how the psalms are a vehicle for God to commune with his people. Specific psalms are shown to have been a guide and an inspiration to Jesus as he learned about his role as Messiah.

The verse-by-verse article looks not at a specific psalm but at 1 Chronicles 25. Here we find David making the decisions to establish music as a part of the worship of God, and the role the Levites would have in that service.

A reprint from the Bible Study Monthly examines the twelve psalms of Asaph, David's chief musician. We learn that in his musical preoccupation, Asaph found time to study the word of the Lord and become a medium through which the holy spirit could speak. Asaph is called the "seer" in 2 Chronicles 29:30.

We end with an "echo from the past," an article describing the importance of the psalms in our sacred songs. Truly we have a rich legacy from the men and women who have used their talents to produce the hymnody that is so treasured within the Christian church.

May our appreciation for God be enhanced and our praise for him even greater as we reflect on his goodness described in the psalms.

## Structure in the Psalms

# God's Poem

For we are his workmanship [Greek: *poiema*, poem], created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.—Ephesians 2:10

Donald Holliday

The works of God reveal to the spirit-enlightened mind a concept of beauty and delight surpassing human experience. The word poem, derived from the Greek *poiema*, has found this charisma. It suggests in its highest form an eloquence in a creation that breathes its sweet influence into the heart, enlarging concept, and awakening emotion. All the works of God in creation contain an index of the great mind that brought them forth. Every material thing represents what was once a thought in that mind. Wonders of divine skill and wisdom lie entrenched in even the minutest material creation. While day unto day uttereth speech in the language of the magnificent celestial spheres of the heavens, the oceans below conceal beauties of coral and marine life that lie deep beneath the surface and the natural limits of human vision. Yet with depth of satisfaction does the Great Creator turn to a work of even greater wonder and delight: the New Creation is God's special poem. Herein will yet be seen a magnitude of vision, a concept of excellence far surpassing everything of beauty on this earth.

The spirit that brooded over the misty waters of earth's embryonic forming brought forth life—life that was destined to make this little planet unique. The creation of man in the divine image, and the commencement of the whole plan of redeeming grace, were to witness further brooding of that spirit of God. Gradually the mind of the Creator and his great purpose were revealed through words God breathed through faithful men of old. Thus formed the record we treasure as "God's word."

Language has meaning only according to human experience. This experience is limited to things of time and human sense. How then could God commune his thoughts to such a creature? From first to last the language used is poetry. His thoughts are higher far than ours, as heaven is higher than earth. Yet by this means could he awaken in our minds concepts beyond the power of human speech to define. Thus does the Lord speak to the heart, grant tantalizing glimpses of things unseen, and prompt emotions of no human source.

From Genesis to Revelation are revealed to us thoughts divine as compressed in words that grant a sense of greater realms. With the words come wings of flight for heart alone. Where human intellect fails a heavenly music fills our lives with melody, thus witnessing to that meeting of his spirit with ours.

## The Psalms

The psalms form but a part of this grand song. The added Hebrew title [*tehillim*] means praises, and well describes the prompting of many of the psalms. Another title [*tephilloth*] means prayer, again descriptive of particular psalms. But prophecy is also here, with glimpses of each epoch of redemptive work, crowned by sweet vision of that final state that saints in heaven will know, as well as humanity on earth. "They speak of me," the Master said. Indeed it is here that we find the inmost thoughts of Jesus on the cross.

Modern poetry depends on rhyme and symmetry, with measured syllable and form. These are almost completely absent from this poetry. The appeal of some psalms lies in their expression of deep personal emotion, while that of others lies in the preciousness of truth exposed. The Song of Moses at the overthrow of Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea provides an early specimen of the outburst of joy of deliverance. No artificial restraint of rhyme or meter gilds that outburst of sheer delight in the experience of divine overruling. True, some psalms reveal a somewhat human contriving. The acrostic psalms are such, for here each verse commences with the succeeding Hebrew letter undoubtedly as a memory aid.

Most lines of the psalms contain but two or three Hebrew words, though often many more are needed to translate them into English. In such few words we find compressed a realm of thought, a vista opened like a view from a mountain top: "*Jehovah Roi*," "The Lord [is] my Shepherd." At such thoughts we can rewrite our lives.

If we have spent the hours of night repeating from an anguished mind Psalm 51, only then can we find the blessedness of Psalm 32. The psalms are real, so real, so true, so full of meaning when the heart is in tune. These songs were written to be sung. Before we try to repeat the words we must sense the tune, perceive the feelings thus expressed, find the note, be it high or low, in major or minor key, and harmonize the heart. Otherwise we will not gain its melody in our life.

## Pattern in the Psalms

The psalms were collected over a period of more than half a millennium. The earliest would include that of Moses (Psalm 90). The last additions were after the captivity in Babylon. Eventually the collection was edited, and subsequently the Book of Psalms was seen to consist of five parts. Each portion closes with a benediction (see Psalm 41:13; 72:18,19; 89:52; 106:48; 150:6). This fivefold division has been compared from ancient Hebrew times with the five books of Moses. Many have traced a corresponding pattern of subject in the contents (see Bullinger's Companion Bible, and others.) We do not know with certainty who was responsible for this final editing, though it seems to have occurred in the time of Ezra the scribe. It is of interest to consider the pattern thus suggested that it might stand or fall on its own merit.

The Genesis section (Psalms 1-41) is thought to show the counsels of God concerning man. As Genesis contains the whole Bible in a nutshell so with this portion of the psalms.

The Exodus section (Psalms 42-72) particularly relates to Israel's sufferings and deliverance.

The Leviticus section (Psalms 73-89) concerns the holiness of God and the sanctuary.

The Numbers section (Psalms 90-106) relates to the wilderness wanderings of the people of Israel. It begins with the prayer of Moses (Psalm 90). Even here the eventual rest to which the Lord would bring them is set before them. Psalm 106 closes with a prayer for deliverance before the added benediction of verses 47 and 48.

The Deuteronomy section (Psalms 107-150) opens with the words: "O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south." (Psalm 107:1-3) The great lessons of Deuteronomy are to be learned by Israel and all the nations. Here is the new writing of the Law of God, here the delight in human hearts for the precepts of God which alone are able to make wise unto salvation.

By way of example we will now elaborate on the Exodus section. It is the path for Israel from slavery to deliverance that will first astound then mark the way for all mankind.

### **The "Exodus" Section**

Psalms 42 and 43 offer a cry that reminds us of the deep emotions of David as he was rejected by his people. Leaving the city, he laments; as he passes over the Kidron he cries aloud: "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me" (Psalm 42:7). Thus does he mark the path his Son and Lord must trace. We are here at the opening of the Gospel age.

Psalm 44 reveals they too must walk rejection's path which once had cast him off. Sorrow would swallow up the only people God had known. Their treading down would occupy an age, until the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled (Luke 21:22-24). The cry of God's lamb now echoes from the ghetto of the Jew: "Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? Arise, cast us not off for ever. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression? For our soul is bowed down to the dust: our belly cleaveth unto the earth. Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies sake." (Psalm 44:22-26)

Paul applies some of these words to the saints (see Romans 8:36). Spiritual Israel must walk the same path as their Lord, though they, in contrast to the Jew, do so through faithfulness. Both seeds must pass through the Refiner's fire.

At last the cry of martyr must give place to sounds of greatest joy in realms above (Psalm 45). The once rejected King has come again. In majesty victoriously he rides, his bride made glorious at his side, whose holy beauty he desires.

In perfect sequence comes the great upheaval of this present world in which God's natural people are preserved as depicted in Psalm 46 which ends the age of trial for saint and Jew. The "God of Jacob" once again will be the refuge of those long called to show forth his praise.

Yet not without that final mighty storm will they their "Refuge" find, and hear at last the voice so long refused. "Be still and know that I am God." The angry sea, lashed by satanic powers, in vain must dash against this mighty Rock, while empires crumble and collapse into the deep.

Though nations gather against the little State of Israel and her end seems inevitable to all human eyes, an unseen power will work on her behalf to confound all powers of Satan and of earth. Astonished humanity will also hear those words, "Be still and know..."

The next psalm continues the sequence as all human creation comes to recognize at last a Creator so long denied: "O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth." (Psalm 47:1,2) It is triumphant Israel who speaks. "He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet. He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved." (verses 3,4)

This psalm and the next take us beyond the trouble to reflect, as Jew and Gentile then will do, with deeper wisdom on events that brought an end to sin's dark world. The time to favor Zion has come, Zion, the joy of the whole earth.

Thus in harmonious sequence these seven psalms tell in song the story of two advents and the age between. From the depths of our Savior's travail to the time of full release that brings such satisfaction to his heart. Here minor chords give way to high notes of joy as praise fills all the earth. In view of such a hope the further psalms now cause reflection on the present life.

Psalm 49 brings home the need to shun the ways of fallen creation, its greed, its shallow thought, for naught of this secures the price of sweet release from death's dark shades. Psalm 50 calls the earth and swiftly cuts away false notions of security in religion's vain ritual. The cry of deep repentance, this alone as Psalm 51 reveals, must yet prepare the heart, for only when the need is seen will saving power achieve that "truth in inward parts" the Lord desires.

One by one the following psalms apply truths of the drama that those first seven psalms describe. Deep lessons are here for all to learn until they put their trust in God and him alone (Psalm 71). An age of reflection is set apart for this great task. Then comes joyous



song of kingdom blessing (Psalm 72). Like "rain upon mown grass," all heaven's windows open and to mankind life's waters flow and glory floods the earth.

God's workmanship we are—God's poem. The human creation will confess this too, for every aspect of his work reflects the glory of the Lord. But the saints are first to know the joyful sound and find the melody of heart in heaven's new song.

# God's Tender Loving Care

*All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way.—Isaiah 53:6*

Richard Suraci

The 23rd Psalm tells of the rescue, guidance and reward of the little flock of sheep God is leading. Who is the shepherd? All things are of the Father and by the Son (1 Corinthians 8:6). As the Logos the Son was God's mouthpiece and agent of creation. All God's messages were conveyed through him. Thus we may view both the Father as the great Master Shepherd and the Son as our Good Shepherd.

**"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."**

A better rendering is, "I shall not be in want." The Lord supplies just what we need. "My God shall supply all your needs according to his riches of glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). We will never lack the proper care and management from our shepherd.

Since David knew the meaning of personal poverty, hardship, and anguish of spirit, he could not mean that God's sheep will never experience any lack or need. All God's "holy men of old"—even our Good Shepherd—experienced personal privation and adversity.

An implied meaning of this text is, "I shall not want any other shepherd." If the Lord is "Our Shepherd," it is his voice we follow. We desire no other shepherd, nor will we hearken to other voices. As Jesus explains, "When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers." (John 10:4,5)

Once we identify our shepherd as the guardian of the flock, we follow him because his voice is one of love and authority without equal.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures."

A new convert who finds himself on the mountain top because of his newly acquired relationship with God feels he can easily conquer the world. God in his wisdom knows the long, hard, steady pull that is ahead and "makes him lie down in green pastures." He does not suggest nor lead; he makes it happen.

This finds fulfillment throughout a sheep's lifetime. In our modern work-packed lives we seem to lose the ability to relax, so God may at times compel us to rest. But rest is not an end in itself. The purpose of rest is to revive us as we meditate and feed on God's word, to rekindle our energy so we can continue in the narrow way of sacrifice.

It is difficult for sheep to lie down unless they are free from fear, free from friction with other sheep, free from flies and insects, and free from hunger. The shepherd provides release from these problems. His diligent care makes it possible for them to lie down in peace.

Sheep are timid and easily panicked. When one startled sheep runs in fright, a dozen more may follow in blind fear. Life produces many uncertainties. The unknown or unexpected can produce the greatest panic. Fear makes us "freeze" on the spot; then we attempt to run away. In the midst of our anxieties our Good Shepherd quietly informs us that he knows our dilemma and is involved with us. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear [or timidity]; but of power, and of love, and of a sound [disciplined] mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

Another source of unrest is that of tension, rivalry, and competition within the flock itself. Rivalry produces friction within a flock, making rest and contentment difficult. When the shepherd appears, the sheep forget their rivalries and stop their fighting. The shepherd's presence makes a big difference in their behavior. Competition among the Lord's people should be non-existent. Seeking headship in an ecclesia is detrimental to the peace and rest of the group. One is the Lord and head, we are all servants of him and each other. "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Philippians 2:3).

Sheep will not rest if bothered by parasites and insects. They will constantly shake their heads or stamp their feet trying to rid themselves of these pests. The diligent care of the shepherd keeps these insects at a minimum. By using repellents and various dips, he controls the problem, allowing his sheep to rest peacefully. Trials and disagreeable experiences are like these pests. We should tell the shepherd about our vexations through prayer. Of course the Lord knows about our trials before we tell him. Yet he wants us to tell him so we may realize our need of him and our inability to cope with our trials alone.

Freedom from hunger is the fourth requirement for a sheep's restful peace as it lays down in green pastures. Pastures in Palestine differ from what we see today. David had to search for green pastures amid boundless wilderness. Except for these scattered pastures, the land was mostly barren. Yet sheep thrive in a semi-arid climate because there are fewer insects and hazards to health.

As we learn to appreciate how barren earthly hopes are, we will be drawn closer to our shepherd. Our closeness to him will guarantee the richest experiences and refreshment as we enjoy his constant care in our daily lives. But sheep that wander away from the flock, looking for their own pastures or who follow the voice of false shepherds, are most likely to eat poisonous plants or be devoured by wild animals.

**"He leadeth me beside still waters."**

When sheep are thirsty, they become restless and search for water. If not led to clean drinking water, they will drink from polluted holes where they pick up all sorts of

diseases. Water is an indispensable part of a Christian's life. We need it, we crave it, we cannot survive without it. "Still water" implies both the quenching of thirst and that of peace and quiet. Water is a symbol of truth. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst" (John 4:14).

We know what refreshment comes from water. This helps us understand our Lord's words about the water of life which he gives to his people: "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink" (John 7:37). To drink means to take in, to accept, to believe. It is an assimilation of God's word into our hearts, to the point where it becomes an active part of our lives.

"He leadeth me beside still waters" means that he knows where the still, clean waters are and can satisfy his sheep and keep them fit and strong. Water for sheep comes from four main sources: dew on the grass, deep wells, springs, and streams. Sheep in cooler climates can go for long periods of time without drinking if there is heavy dew on the grass each morning. This too, is a form of "still waters."

Sheep rise before dawn and start to feed. The early hours are when the grass is drenched with dew and they can keep fit on the amount of water taken in from the grass as they graze. But when the sun rises, its rays evaporate the dew. What a blessing it is for the Lord's sheep to feed upon God's word "early in the morning." "O God thou art my God, early will I seek thee, my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is" (Psalm 63:1). The still waters at the opening of each day fortify us as we drink from God's precious word.

Early morning meditation and study are profitable to the Lord's sheep because the mind and body are rested, relaxed and sharper than at any other time of the day. The early morning hours are unique for prayer and study because it is quiet.

The world also has thirsts. It tries to quench that thirst with worldly waters: knowledge, science, music, arts, traveling, sports, hobbies. But the thirst remains largely unsatisfied. Unless we are led by "still waters" each day of our lives, we might be tempted by other pursuits that will impede our growth.

### **"He restoreth my soul."**

"He saveth my life" is a better translation. A bear and a lion tried to devour David's sheep. He went to their rescue and saved their lives. Many times God saved David's life and revived him when he was cast down, dejected, and fell under temptation.

How many times has God saved our lives both as human beings and as new creatures in Christ Jesus? Which of us could combat the "roaring lion" of 1 Peter 5:8 single-handedly? What may we accomplish without the strength and "power of his might"? It will only be from the vantage point of heaven that we will see how often our shepherd kept us from falling into the jaws of the Adversary.

David asked, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" (Psalm 42:11) There is a special meaning for "cast" as it applies to sheep. A "cast" or "cast down" sheep is an old English term for a sheep that has turned over on its back and cannot get up by itself. It is pathetic to see a sheep lying on its back, feet in the air, struggling in vain to get up. If the shepherd doesn't rescue it, it will die. The shepherd watches for this serious condition. Wild animals know a cast sheep is easy prey. When the shepherd sees a "cast sheep," he tenderly lifts it up to a standing position. As it regains its strength, it starts to walk again and rejoins the flock. It has been given another chance to live.

The whole world is in the position of "cast sheep," lying helplessly on their backs. Our Good Shepherd saved our lives initially with his own precious blood; his saving and reviving power continues to the very end. "For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?" (Psalm 56:13)

We fall in our daily lives. "The steps of a good man are established by the Lord ;,;. though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand" (Psalm 37:23,24). If a sheep has an excessive amount of wool weighing it down which could cause it to be "cast down," the shepherd will shear it. If this happens to us, may our reaction be as commendable as the Hebrew brethren who Paul said "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods" (Hebrews 10:34).

### **"He leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake."**

The word rendered "righteousness" means "right." "He leads me in right paths for his name's sake." If sheep are left to themselves, they will graze the same paths until they become wastelands; they will pollute the land until it is corrupt with disease. They chew out the roots which destroys vegetation. David knew that if his flock were to prosper, they must be shifted from pasture to pasture periodically. There must be a pre-determined plan of action, co-mingled with principles of sound management. This is what David had in mind when he said, "He leadeth me in right paths."

"Right paths" are straight paths. The word path means "track," a fixed definite way of life. This straight path leading to heaven was started by our Lord Jesus and has been well-trodden by all God's faithful people.

"It is not in man who walketh to direct his steps. O Lord correct me, but with judgment" (Jeremiah 10:23,24). This is exactly what David meant when he wrote, "He leadeth me." David knew he could not lead himself aright! He could see his sheep were dependent upon him for guidance. He saw in himself the same wayward qualities of his sheep.

"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept thy word. I have gone astray like a lost sheep, seek thy servant for I do not forget thy commandments" (Psalm 119:67, 176). If we find ourselves straying from the right paths, we should go straight to the Lord, baring our soul in his presence. This is the only way to "make straight paths for our feet" (Hebrews 12:13).

Sometimes, like sheep, we seek our own way. We may want to assert ourselves, want to carry out our own ideas, do "our own thing." In contrast we have the Good Shepherd's words: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). This is not just in consecration; it is a daily, lifetime endeavor. To follow implies self-denial. As sheep gone astray, we went "each his own way." After being gathered to his fold, a new guidance system has been established in our lives: "Show me thy ways O LORD; teach me thy paths" (Psalm 25:4).

**"Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil, for thou art with me."**

South of the Jericho Road leading from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea there is a narrow passage through a mountain range. Climate and grazing conditions make it essential for sheep to be moved through this passage for seasonal feeding each year. The side walls are over 1500 feet high in places and only 10 to 12 feet wide at the bottom. Travel through it is dangerous because its floor has been eroded by cloudbursts and there are channels seven or eight feet deep. Footing is so narrow that in places sheep cannot turn around. An unwritten rule is that flocks go up in the morning hours and down toward the evening, lest two flocks meet head-on in the middle.

Halfway through the passage the path crosses from one side to the other at a place where it is cut in two by an eight-foot channel. One section of the path is 18 inches higher than the other and the sheep must jump across it. If a sheep falls into the channel, the shepherd's staff is encircled around its neck or chest and it is lifted out. The sheep fear no evil as they walk through this kind of "Valley of the Shadow of Death," for their shepherd is there to assist and protect them.

Our first parents entered the Valley of the Shadow of Death through disobedience and everyone has been in it for over 6,000 years. The Shadow of Death hangs over the human family and it is accompanied by sickness and pain. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together waiting "for the manifestation of the Sons of God" (Romans 8:19). This manifestation or revealment begins with the work of restitution when the human race will be led like sheep out from the death condition.

"In quietness and confidence shall be your strength" (Isaiah 30:15; Job 34:29). Quietness and strength come from the Lord's presence with us—"Thou art with me"—in every situation, in every trial, in every disappointment. Each "valley" experience draws us closer to our shepherd as we learn to lean heavily upon him.

**"Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."**

The shepherd's rod was in the shape of a heavy club. With it the shepherd defended his flock. The staff was lighter and longer with a crook at one end and a point on the other. It was used by the shepherd to prod a careless sheep or help one that had stumbled into a ditch. Both rod and staff provided protection and correction of the sheep.

The rod was a comfort for David's sheep because it was used for their protection; it was an extension of his right hand. God's word provides the same comfort to us. It is extremely comforting to have a "thus saith the Lord" for what we believe to be true. God's word is clear-cut, authoritative, and the most powerful weapon in dealing with error, "foolish babblings and science falsely so-called" (1 Timothy 6:20). God's word dispels confusion from our lives! It brings peace and confidence: "Thy rod comforts me."

The shepherd also used the rod to examine the sheep. As sheep pass through the sheep gate, the shepherd's rod is extended across it. If he lets it fall on a sheep's back, that sheep steps out of line for a careful examination. Because of the wool, it is difficult to detect an injury in sheep. The shepherd uses the thin side of his rod to part the wool so he can examine the sheep's body. Such a diligent shepherd is a joy to the sheep for their problems are laid bare in his hands.

This is the type of confidence we should have in our shepherd. "Search me O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23,24). If we submit to God, he will by his word search us out. He will get below the surface and expose character flaws that need healing.

This isn't something we need to avoid! Spiritual maturity and confidence in God's integrity invite him to cleanse us from pride, self-assertion, self-will; for we know he has our eternal welfare in mind. Truly, "thy rod comforts me."

The staff is a symbol of the concern and compassion a shepherd has for his sheep. It is not only gentle in appearance but also in performance. The shepherd uses his staff to draw sheep together or to catch individual sheep and draw them close for careful inspection. The staff is used to guide sheep. Its tip is laid gently along the sheep's side and the applied pressure indicates the way the sheep are to go.

Through comfort of God's word we "keep in touch" with our shepherd. A keen awareness of this closeness and our oneness with him should fill our hearts. The child of God should have this intimate experience of sensing the comforter by his side each step of the way.

Because they are stubborn creatures, sheep get into dangerous predicaments. Greedy for a few stray strands of grass they may wander into a thorny bush or too close to a hillside, causing them to slip off and fall into thorns and thistles. Because of self-assertion we may push ourselves into places where we cannot escape. It is then that we feel the comfort from the Good Shepherd as he tenderly lifts us up and draws us close to himself.

**"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."**

Poisonous plants are fatal to grazing animals, so the shepherd must be on the alert. In preparing the pasture for his sheep he goes ahead of the flock weeding out the poisonous plants and lays them on a little stone table. By the next day they are dry enough to burn.

The sheep are led into the newly prepared pasture, and in the presence of their deadly enemies, they graze in peace.

Predators are deadly enemies of the sheep that wait in dark shadows for an opportunity to stampede the flock. The wayward sheep are the ones most likely to be attacked. When attacked they become dumb with fright, unable to cry for help. We must stay close to our shepherd at all times. When attacked by the Adversary, it is most essential not to panic nor become mute. Rather we should "come boldly to the throne that we may find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

### **"Thou anointest my head with oil."**

At the sheepfold there is a large bowl of olive oil mingled with spices, and a large jar of water. As the sheep pass through the gate, the shepherd examines each head and body for wounds. These are carefully cleaned as the shepherd dips his hand into the oil to anoint the injury. A cup is dipped into the water and comes out overflowing and the sheep drinks until refreshed.

The shepherd pays particular attention to the head. Sheep are especially troubled by flies which deposit eggs on the moist membrane of the nose. The eggs hatch producing slender worm-like creatures that go up the nasal passage into the head where they tunnel into the flesh causing intense irritation. Advanced stages of infection may lead to blindness.

Once again it is the "Tender Loving Care" of the shepherd that knows the problem and helps overcome it. At the first sign of flies among the flock he anoints each head. Some shepherds today use a combination of linseed oil, sulfur and tar for the sheep's head and nose. They say an incredible change takes place in sheep when this is done. This oil affects their behavior, freeing them of their problems, allowing them to graze in peace.

The holy spirit is doing the same work in God's people today. We are admonished "Be ye filled with the spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). It is one thing to have an initial begetting and quite another to be filled with the spirit. Our Good Shepherd tells us of the Father's delight in giving the holy spirit to them who ask him (Luke 11:13).

### **"My cup runneth over."**

This overflowing cup comes as a result of God's indwelling spirit. Our Master's cup was one of suffering, shame and death. He invited us to drink of his cup and be baptized with his baptism (Matthew 20:22). It becomes our cup also; but he promises us a new cup of joy which he will share with us in his kingdom. Our joys in the eternal future will be beyond what we could have asked or thought. "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard neither hath entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).



**"Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."**

The word surely means "certainly, truly." There is no doubt that the Lord will be with us. We know of our shepherd's "Tender Loving Care" because he laid down his life for us and is managing our lives. No matter what trial or calamity comes our way, our heart knows that "surely" God's goodness and mercy will be a part of the experience.

"Surely, goodness and mercy shall pursue me all the days of my life," is a better translation. Instead of being pursued by fears the "little flock" follows the Good Shepherd and listens to his voice. God's goodness and mercy pursue them, watch over them, care for them.

**"I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."**

This beautiful psalm opens with the happy affirmation: "The Lord is my shepherd." It closes with the most positive, unbreakable, eternal affirmation of a heart that is loved and nurtured by God's love and mercy. The house of the Lord is his dwelling place. We must "dwell" with God to know and understand him. It will take an eternity of dwelling with him to accomplish this. As we do, we will remember the way in which "God's Tender Loving Care" led us to life eternal.

# Early Stages of the Kingdom Rule

*Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.—Matthew 6:10*

Charles Redeker

The Book of Psalms has long been treasured for its devotional character—for the deep feelings of praise and confidence in the heavenly Father which it evokes, for the thankfulness and hope that it sets forth. There could be no more beneficial way to spend our time than in reading, studying and memorizing some of its verses and the precious promises contained therein. Another significant aspect of the book is its prophetic import, an area we would like to examine in this study.

The prophecies found in the psalms cover a wide field. They pertain to the future of Israel and to the nations of the world. They touch on the exaltation of the Church and judgment of the unrighteous. Then there are those that concern our Lord Jesus: his pre-human existence, his sufferings during his earthly ministry, and his resurrection and eternal throneship. Still other prophecies point to his second coming and earthly reign with his Church. It is this latter grouping that will hold our special attention as we consider the conditions and circumstances prevailing during the early phases of the kingdom rule.

It is evident to students of Scripture that the grand promises of God to his earthly creation—restitution blessings, global peace, economic prosperity, everlasting life—are destined to come about as a consequence of the establishment of his kingdom on earth. Whereas the term "kingdom" is used variously in the Bible, its main depiction is as a divine ruling government, such as in Daniel 7:14,18. There the kingdom is given to the Son as an everlasting dominion in which "all people, nations, and languages should serve him." Moreover, "the saints of the Most High shall [also] .∴. possess the kingdom for ever." (See also Psalm 145:11-13.)

The character of the early stages of this kingdom rule, when Christ returns with kingly power to assume his rightful inheritance, will be of special concern. This is where the prophetic insights of the psalms are instructive and upon which we intend to draw heavily. Surprising to some will be the clear indications that the early stages of Christ's reign are not all peaceful and serene, with blessings immediately available to all mankind. On the contrary, the Scriptural setting depicts dark clouds and trouble, nations in rebellion, and powerful enemies resisting the incoming kingdom. Global conflict and social distress characterize this period when Messiah returns and begins to assume control of earth's affairs.

Let us now note some of the pertinent passages in the psalms that spell out this sequence of events, much of it in language that is most colorful and descriptive. Sometimes the references are clear and unmistakable; other times they are only veiled foreshadowings which need to be illuminated by parallel texts and various translations of the Hebrew. By

bringing them all together, we hope to reveal the underlying meanings and clarify the otherwise obscure teachings bearing on our subject.

### **Jehovah's Anointed King**

Psalm 2:6-8 declares that God has anointed his king upon his holy hill of Zion—Zion representing the heavenly phase of the kingdom. By decree, it is his Son who receives the dominion and all nations are to become his inheritance. Psalm 72:8 defines this dominion as reaching "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." Psalm 72 further notes that the king will rule in equity and bring justice to the people because his judgments and righteousness are received directly from God. Psalm 110 then informs us that it is by God's own unchangeable oath that his Son was ordained to rule, "after the order of Melchizedek," that is, as both king and priest.

### **Nations In Rebellion**

With the bleak record that history portrays of the inhumanity of the fallen race and its inability to properly govern itself, one would think that the nations of the world would welcome the thought of divine intervention in their affairs. But the Scriptures declare the opposite to be true. Psalm 2:1-3 graphically portrays the uprising of earth's people and rulers against God and Christ, and the principles of truth and righteousness. In a tumultuous assembling of the nations, the rulers take counsel against Jehovah and his anointed, seeking to throw off all moral and religious restraints. Deluded and blinded by the Adversary, they continue to believe that they do not need divine assistance and do their utmost to oppose and weaken all godly influence.

As part of the biblical end of the age scenario, there have already been flagrant examples of this uprising, uprisings which continue and which intensify. Early on, the communist ideology openly attacked all religion as such; subsequently, disregard for religious standards spread to every land, accompanied by rapid growth of materialism and a humanistic world view. The deterioration of moral standards is now everywhere evident, with a seeming preoccupation with violence, sexual immorality and worldly pleasures. Even mainline churches are succumbing to the so-called "new morality." Abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia have also become common, and acts of genocide are regularly making the news.

These developments are occurring on an alarming scale and, though diverse and seemingly loosely related, all have one common denominator—rebellion against divine law. Hence, from God's standpoint, it is fitting to express them in figurative language as "tak[ing] counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us" (Psalm 2:2,3). This defiance is pictured elsewhere as warring against the returning king, as in Revelation 19:19, in the vain attempt, unwittingly perhaps, to resist the establishment of the incoming kingdom of righteousness.

Yet Psalm 2:4 states that "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord [Hebrew: *adonai*\*] shall have them in derision. Who is this one? We submit that it is not God as many commentaries state, but his right arm, the Lord Jesus. In Psalm 110:1 we read: "The LORD said unto my Lord [*adon*], Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." *Adon* here is the Messiah, who although depicted as "sitting" at Jehovah's side, is not inactive, but the very reverse; his appointment is to a position of authority, the exercise of which involves activity. Isaiah 40:10 states clearly "his arm [Messiah] shall rule for him [Jehovah]." And Psalm 98:1 adds that it is "his [Jehovah's] right hand, and his holy arm, [that] hath gotten him the victory." Hence it appears to be Messiah himself who disdains the defiant stance of the nations and their unwise efforts to resist his taking charge of their affairs.

### **Messiah's Conquering Reign**

Psalm 2:10-12 depicts God's warning to the rulers of earth not to oppose the incoming kingdom, but to serve him in reverence and obedience. If they are foolish enough to spurn his good counsel and refuse to submit to his loving authority, the Son's wrath will be kindled: he will speak to them in deep anger and confound them in sore displeasure. He has been given the power and right, as the anointed returning king, to break the nations with a rod of iron and to dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.

Psalm 97:1-7 provides an especially insightful account of the early phase of Messiah's reign, prior to the time when his presence as returned king is clearly recognized. Although Jehovah is credited with reigning, it is actually accomplished in the person of his great representative, Christ Jesus. (See Reprints page 5989.) Characteristics of this period which are vividly portrayed in this psalm are (a) storm clouds of trouble (see Luke 21:27), (b) the gloom of darkness (see Joel 2:1,2), (c) fire which burns up the enemies of God (see Zephaniah 3:8), (d) the earth trembling under the onslaught and judgment of God, as everything out of harmony with divine standards of righteousness is removed (see 2 Peter 3:10-12 and Hebrews 12:26,27), and (e) flashes of lightning, lighting up the earth: truths along many lines flashing out to provide enlightenment for the people in the midst of all the gloom and perplexity. All of these signs are part of the present distress, as the injustices and errors of the past begin to give way to the light of the new day.

Psalm 110 correlates perfectly with this account. Jehovah sends the rod of the Lord's strength out of Zion to rule in the midst of his enemies, who, as already seen, are to be made his footstool (verses 1 and 2). The Lord at his right hand shatters earthly kings in the day of his wrath. He executes judgment upon the nations, filling them with dead bodies, while crushing the leaders of even strong countries (verses 5 and 6).

These prophecies of the psalms interlace closely with the word pictures of Revelation that bear on this same time period. Revelation 11:15 highlights the transfer of the kingdom of this world to Jehovah and his Christ at the sounding of the seventh angel. As Messiah assumes his position of power and begins his reign, the nations are angry and kindle his wrath. But nothing can prevail against his conquering power, for those who would

oppose him and destroy the earth will themselves be destroyed in the conflict (verses 17 and 18)

Revelation 19:11-21 enlarges the picture further to identify in symbol various participants of the battle. Included in this are the false religious systems—the beast [mother church] and the false prophet [daughter churches]—which cooperate with the kings of the earth and their armies to make war against the Word of God [Christ] and his armies [the true Church]. A sharp sword proceeds out of the Lord's mouth, with which he smites the nations. He rules with a rod of iron and treads out the winepress of the wrath of God. The outcome is certain as the beast and the false prophet are taken and everlastingly destroyed; and the kings of earth with their armies are slain.

### **The Church in Battle Array**

The role of the consecrated followers of Christ during the early stages of the kingdom rule is likewise vividly portrayed in the prophetic psalms. Psalm 149:5-9 leads off by saying, "Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud upon their beds." Displaying "the high praises of God .;. in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand," they "execute vengeance upon the heathen [nations], and punishments upon the people." They "bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written." The psalmist adds, "this honor have all his saints."

In seeking the most satisfactory explanation of these verses, we note first that the language parallels that of Psalm 2, Psalm 110 and Revelation 19:11,15 where the early phase of Christ's conquering reign is depicted. Hence, the involvement of "all his saints" is best viewed as contemporaneous with these events—actually occurring during the worldwide distresses of the present time. Psalm 149 pictures the joyful participation of the saints on both sides of the veil in kingdom work. (See Reprints page 5451.)

In this view, the Lord's followers in the flesh are credited with executing vengeance upon the disobedient nations by their zealous engagement in the proclamation of truth and in their wide-ranging witnessing activities. In God's eyes, this would be equivalent to the more direct confrontation of the risen saints against the enemies of righteousness. A similar kind of reckoning is illustrated in the Old Testament role of Jeremiah. By faithfully proclaiming God's message, the prophet was credited with being "set over the nations and kingdoms [of his day], to root out, to pull down, and to destroy." (Jeremiah 1:4-10)

Psalm 110:3 provides additional insights into the work of the saints, in language which is highly figurative: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning." The time element identified here as "morning" may suggest that the activity takes place in the beginning of the new [symbolic] day—the long-awaited seventh thousand-year day of earth's history. Psalm 46:5 [margin] indicates that God directly intervenes to help the saints "when the morning appeareth," suggesting the resurrection of the sleeping saints and the instantaneous change of individual believers as they finish their course. As the Church in the flesh discerns their Lord's

return and the world-shaking events accompanying it, they become willing participants with Christ, fully desirous of sharing in the early phases of his conquering reign.

Other translations of Psalm 110:3 describe the participation of the saints in wording that has a distinctly military tone. Rotherham's footnote renders it, "Thy people will be ready to volunteer in the day of thy host" (or "army"). The phrase, "in the beauties of holiness," may likewise be translated "in holy array" (American Standard version), suggesting an orderly, cooperative stance not unlike a military formation. This is further borne out in the final portion of the verse, "thou hast the dew of thy youth," which could also be rendered, "thy young men spring forth to thee, fresh as the dew." For "young men" Rotherham further suggests, "figuratively of young warriors of the king with flashing weapons like dew drops." Hence, participation in the work of Christ during the early stages of the setting up of his kingdom may be likened to the combined efforts of dedicated, disciplined warriors carrying forward their king's objectives.

### **The Glorious Aftermath**

Thus may be seen how various utterances of the psalms offer insight into the early stages of the kingdom work and how these may be viewed as being fulfilled in the present tumultuous events of the world. Happily, the psalmist goes on to give us a satisfying glimpse of the glorious aftermath of Christ's conquering reign as well. In a climactic burst of poetic praise, Psalm 150 fittingly extols God for his "power," his "mighty acts" and his "excellent greatness," all of which will soon culminate in bringing blessings to all the families of the earth. Then truly it will be said, "let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD." (verse 6)

The psalms then specifically portray some of the wonderful conditions that are to prevail during the blessing phase of Christ's reign:

"The mountains shall bring peace to the people;" "he shall save the children of the needy and shall break in pieces the oppressor"; "men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed."—Psalm 72

"He maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire."—Psalm 46:9

"The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." —Psalm 37:11

"He shall judge the world in righteousness .;. The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed."—Psalm 9:8,9

"Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth .;. Let all the people praise thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us."—Psalm 67:4-6

What a glorious preview of the kingdom in full operation and God exalted in all the earth at last!

\* Adonai (Strong's #136) is from the root adon, which is defined simply as "sovereign, i.e., controller (human or divine.)"

# NEWS AND VIEWS

## Pastoral Bible Institute News

### Financial Statement of the Pastoral Bible Institute, Inc.

---

Statement of Net Worth April 30, 1999  
[unaudited]

#### **Current Assets:**

Cash and Investments \$114,668

Fixed Assets:

Library 800

Total Assets: \$115,468

#### **Liabilities None**

**NET WORTH, APRIL 30, 1999 \$115,468**

---

### **Analysis of Net Worth**

#### **INCOME**

Contributions \$12,902

Sale of Material 11,382

Herald Subscriptions 5,111

Interest 5,636

Memberships 45

Miscellaneous Income 392

Total Income \$35,468

#### **OPERATING EXPENSES**

Purchase of Material for Resale \$9,883

Printing and Reproduction 6,948

Postage and Delivery 4,722

Advertising 2,044

Administrative 304

Total Operating Expense \$23,901

Net Gain for Fiscal Year \$11,567



Net Worth, May 1, 1998 \$103,901  
Net Worth, April 30, 1999 \$115,468

---

Respectfully Submitted by Len Griehs, Treasurer

## PBI Annual Report

*"For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building."—1 Corinthians 3:9*

The Institute this past year has continued to cooperate with the work of the Lord in the edification of his children. Our main tool is The Herald. After careful consideration, the editors decided to maintain the same thematic format for the journal. Comments from our readers indicate that they are receiving benefits from the subjects we have selected. Care has been given to balancing these topics to include devotional, doctrinal, and prophetic subjects. We have continued our regular News and Views feature with short excerpts from the media about what is happening in the world. Many of our readers enjoy this connection between biblical prophecy and current events.

The Herald continues to be available on cassette tape at a reasonable cost and will be furnished free to the blind. Each issue may also be found on The Herald web page along with many other articles on the Bible.

In an on-going effort to increase circulation, a full-page ad was placed in the magazine Bible Review. We intend to pursue other ways to enlarge our subscription base in the coming year. Present circulation is roughly 1000. Although this is a small number, we do appreciate the loyalty of our readers and encourage their comments.

We continue to supply most booklets free, sometimes including one with the magazine itself. We have adopted a policy of limiting the number of booklets offered to those we deem best in each subject area. These selections are made not only from our own publications, but from those produced by other Bible Student groups as well. We will also continue to tell our readers about new books we think would be of interest. They will be available from us only while our initial supplies last.

We will reprint our own booklets only if we believe they are the best in that subject area. Reprinted booklets will be pocket size and have a four-color cover. Those scheduled for printing this year are "What is the Soul?", "Israel and the Middle East," and "The Resurrection of the Dead."

The Pastoral Bible Institute is now the distributor of a computer CD ROM entitled Bible Students' Library. It contains some eleven translations of the Bible, virtually all of the writings of Pastor Charles Russell, and a large selection of other materials including over 300 articles from past issues of The Herald. A second included disk contains three videos,

numerous hymns sung by the Bible Students, and a reading of the complete Divine Plan of the Ages. This set of two disks is still available at a price of \$25, postpaid.

We are looking forward to the coming year and will attempt to provide thought-provoking material for the Lord's people. We earnestly desire your comments and participation, and especially your prayers that all may be done to the glory of our Heavenly Father.

The Directors, Pastoral Bible Institute

### Newly Reprinted Booklet

The booklet "What Is the Soul?" has just been reprinted in a fresh new format with a four-color cover. We are so pleased with its appearance we enclosed one in this issue of The Herald. Please contact us if you want to obtain this booklet in quantity for your witness activities.

### Temporary Closing of the PBI Office

Our California office will close for one month beginning in mid-July. Orders and inquiries received after July 15 will be processed beginning in mid-August. We regret any inconvenience this may cause.

### Letters

I am reading in your web site, with more pleasure to my spirit, the articles about the Shadow of the Cross. I must congratulate you as they are very instructive, edifying, and biblically balanced. I am kindly requesting information as to how to subscribe to The Herald as I am in Mexico. Thank you so much for the information. May God bless your ministry.

—Pastor Eduardo Paulin, Mexico

I am so pleased by the material in each Herald that I am sometimes saddened that others may find it unacceptable. This is just speculation on my part, but it may be that [some are] unable to accept the prediction that Israel will become the earthly center of Christ's kingdom, perhaps thus rejecting all of the rest of The Herald's most timely and wonderful messages as unworthy of their attention.

Many thanks for the articles being selected and organized. Each issue is fresh and inspiring. Also, as an old-timer, let me thank you for the occasional reprints of articles out of the past. You may chuckle at this, but I can remember the sound of the authors' voices as I read their words!

Bill Seikman, Wisconsin

(Bill is the son of Will Siekman who devotedly served the PBI and our brethren to the end of his earthly life.)

## Around the World

Few places in the world can rival Sudan for misery. Africa's largest country in land area, it is also one of the most war-torn on a continent with more than its share of wars. Civil conflict has gripped Sudan for most of the past 16 years. The toll, from war and war-induced famine, has been staggering: in a population of 30 million, nearly 2 million dead and another 4 million forced from their homes, according to the U.S. Committee for Refugees. The ranks of the displaced are larger than in any other country; the number of deaths is greater than from conflicts in Kosovo, Bosnia, Somalia, Chechnya, Afghanistan and Algeria combined.

—International Herald Tribune, 5/8-9/99

As the wave of refugees floods out of Kosovo, Western states and institutions are scrambling to support the fragile economy of the only unconditional Balkan ally in the fight against Serbia: Albania, an impoverished, unstable country of 3.3 million whose population has grown by a crushing 10% in a month. Five decades of repressive communism and a nightmarish post-communist experience emptied the Albanian treasury and left most Albanians distrustful of officials and institutions. Already, Albania's main opposition party alleges that corrupt officials siphoned off humanitarian aid now being sold in market stalls. The huge number of Kosovar refugees may drown out the hopeful signs of progress. Some believe that unmonitored aid could be like pouring water into sand. "Here corruption is like a game without rules," said Vebi Velija, president of VeVe group and one of Albania's biggest businessmen. "They are just waiting for new loans from the World Bank and the IMF."

—Wall Street Journal, 4/19/99

## Israel

President Ezer Weizman stated that the Russian sale of missiles to Syria poses a greater threat to Israel than the Chinese sales to Iran. The president made his comments at the end of his trip to China during which time several agreements were signed between the two countries. The president and his wife led a contingent of over 40 prominent businessmen on the trip. During his visit, the president admitted to discussing the Iranian issue with China's President Jiang Zemin, but declined to give details of the talks. Despite this, Weizman insisted that the Russian ground-to-ground missiles that are stationed in the Syrian capital are a greater threat than the missiles deployed in Iran.

—Israel Wire, 4/29/99

A \$60 million project is underway to recreate the city of Nazareth. When construction is finished, a village of 35 one-room stone houses, inhabited by actors and storytellers in

authentic garb, will illuminate the life and teachings of Jesus. A parable walk, museum, study center and restaurant are also planned for the park in southwestern Nazareth. The project, dubbed Nazareth Village, is set to open with the new millennium, when millions of tourists are expected to visit the Holy Land.

—Biblical Archaeology Review, May/June 1999

Up to 110,000 Russian Jews may immigrate to Israel each year, almost twice the current number, a Jewish Agency official was quoted as saying recently. Felix Decktor, press secretary of the Moscow branch of the agency, told the Interfax news agency that Russian Jews have been showing more interest in immigrating since the government in Russia devalued the ruble and defaulted on its loans.

—Israel My Glory, April/May 1999

## Islam

Hard-line newspapers in Iran have been building up momentum against Ataollah Mohajerani, a liberal Islamic thinker and the most important minister in the cabinet, because of his contribution to the vision of a democratic civil society, publishing bitter comments voicing concern over the "cultural chaos" befalling the country. "This poisonous cultural atmosphere created by the minister's tolerance has allowed dissident writers to write against the system and Islam" said Mohammad-Hassan Jamshidi, one of the conservative deputies. Minister Mohajerani is among a generation of Moslem intellectuals and philosophers advocating a compassionate approach toward religion and politics. Recently he came under fire for authorizing secular writers to form an independent guild and awarding some of them prizes for works he said contributed to the revolution.

—Reuters, 4/30/99

## Christendom

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops has produced a document called "The Holy See and the Middle East." The document's purpose is to proclaim the Holy See's interest in the Holy Land.\* "The Holy Land, as the popes love to call the Middle East, should be a sort of workshop for inter-religious dialogue, with Jerusalem, the Holy City par excellence, as its symbol. This explains why, and with what perseverance and intensity, since 1947, the popes have made themselves the defenders of the preservation of the unique and sacred character of that City. The Holy See therefore strictly favors a special internationally guaranteed statute for the most sacred areas of the City, in order in the future to preserve and protect the identity of the Holy City in its entirety and in every aspect: The historical, material, religious and cultural characteristics; the equality of rights and treatment for those belonging to the three religious communities; the rights of freedom and access to the shrines for residents and pilgrims alike. . . . This request of the Holy See regards the most religiously significant part of the City, namely the Old City.

But such a formula would have to be extended to other shrines outside the Old City and beyond Greater Jerusalem, in Israel as well as in the West Bank." (Emphasis supplied.)

—National Conference of Catholic Bishops web page, 3/10/99

## Economics

The financial crisis that hit most of the world's emerging market economies and prompted the leading industrial countries into emergency interest rate cuts over the past year "seems to be over," Michel Camdessus, the managing director of the IMF said. The painful social consequences of the crisis in many countries will take a while to be resolved however, he said. The general tone of the IMF seems to be a combination of modest satisfaction that the world has regained a measure of stability, and a strong desire to press ahead with reforms to the global financial system to prevent a repeat of the events of the past year.

—Washington Financial Wire, 4/26/99

Members of a new financial stability forum have expressed concern that an apparent easing of the global financial crisis may be slowing efforts to reform weak financial systems. Andrew Crockett, the chairman of the forum, said that there was some concern that reforms are not proceeding as planned because of improvement in the currency crisis. "As somebody put it," he said, "as the crisis appears to have receded, maybe the pressure to strengthen financial systems and restructure corporate and banking sectors becomes somewhat less."

—Financial Times, 4/19/99

## Science

The DNA of 40 people from around the world is to be mapped in a global effort to determine how infinitesimal modifications in the genetic code underlie the basic differences between individuals. The two-year project could have value for medicine, enabling doctors to individualize therapies by adapting them to fit a patient's unique genetic profile. The project is the latest step in decoding DNA, the double-helix structure of which was discovered by James Watson and Francis Crick in 1953. Dr. Paul Herring, head of research at Novartis, a Swiss pharmaceutical company, said that knowledge of genetic predisposition could revolutionize medicine. Diseases are usually caused by a combination of genetic and environmental factors, but it is not always easy to identify or modify them.

—Bloomberg News, 4/15/99

## Book Review

**Fear No Evil**, Natan Sharansky. Translated by Stefani Hoffman. New York: Public Affairs, 1998.

It is difficult to imagine life in a totalitarian and corrupt "police state" like the old USSR where every aspect of everyone's life is controlled. Example: a Jew who wanted to emigrate to Israel would apply for an exit visa, would immediately lose his job, and then often be refused. These were called "refuseniks."

Natan Sharansky, an intellectual, a dissident, and well-known by western journalists was one of these. On March 15, 1977, under orders of the KGB he was arrested, tried, and convicted of crimes against the state because he had passed to journalists the names of refuseniks and examples of violations of the Helsinki human rights accords that the USSR had signed. This book describes his experiences during a long period of detention.

Suppose we were imprisoned because we wanted to practice our religious beliefs. Where would we draw the line between what we would and would not do to cooperate with the government? Sharansky not only refused to speak to anyone from the KGB about anything, he even refused their offer to expel him to Israel due to failing health (caused by an extended hunger strike) which depended only upon him formally asking them to do so.

Not everyone drew the line this way. Another dissident reasoned that cooperating with the KGB was justified if it would lead to his release. "If I can get out, imagine how useful I can be [to the dissident movement]." Sharansky writes: "Watching him I clearly understood . . . that without firm moral principles it was impossible to withstand the pressure of the KGB. If you're a captive of your own fear, you'll not only believe any nonsense, you'll even invent nonsense of your own to justify your behavior."

Sharansky identifies two things that emotionally supported him: a photograph of his wife and the Book of Psalms in Hebrew which he received a few days before his arrest. Naturally he was initially deprived of both. But he found a way to get them back without ever cooperating with them. He writes about the psalms: "I felt both the joy and the suffering of King David. His words lifted me above the mundane and directed me toward the Eternal. I especially liked Psalm 23: 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.' . . . Psalm 27 was a particular comfort to me: 'Do not forsake me, do not abandon me, O God, my deliverer.'"

When the KGB eventually capitulated to tremendous pressure from the west to release him, it abruptly whisked him away from prison. In front of airport photographers he laid on the ground until someone retrieved his Psalm book from the belongings he could not take with him. He describes his thoughts on the plane taking him to freedom: "Now I took the Psalm book and turned to Psalm 30, which I had long ago decided to recite at the moment of my release. . . . 'I extol You, O Lord, for You have lifted me up, and not let my enemies rejoice over me.'"

What a wonderful legacy both Jew and Gentile has in the Book of Psalms. Even after several millennia it continues to be a support and a comfort to those who seek to please God and do what is right.

—Michael Nekora

## The Psalms and God's Children

# Communing with God

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly ;,;. but his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.—Psalm 1:1,2Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.—Psalm 95:2

The Book of Psalms is a collection of sentiments that reflects a variety of feelings and heartfelt expressions ranging from the peaks of joy to the depths of sorrow. Though the psalms may have been written originally as songs and were frequently used during religious ceremonies, they offer even greater purpose by providing doctrine and prophetic lessons to be applied throughout the ages. Christians in this chaotic world of today can greatly benefit from the melodious words and instructions of the psalms by allowing them to have their effect of encouragement and arousal of devotion, praise and thanksgiving.

As "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16), so it is with the Book of Psalms. The psalms are a provision by God and a means for his people to commune with him for the purpose of transforming their minds into the mature development of new creatures.

Vital to knowing the heavenly Father and his word is the understanding of his majesty and power. Like clanging cymbals the psalms boldly announce, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens" (Psalm 19:1; 8:1). Without hesitation God is magnified and an invitation is offered to come before his presence and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms (Psalm 95:2). Humble adoration is encouraged with, "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker" (verse 6). Faith securely rests in knowing that, "the law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple" (Psalm 19:7).

The psalms emphasize the character of God. "For thou, Lord art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto thy works. For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone."—Psalm 86:5,8,10

### **Jesus Knew His Role**

Not only did Jesus know the psalms, in them he could recognize his role as Messiah and redeemer for the human race. In Psalm 89:19-29, David, a name meaning "beloved," beautifully pictures Jesus. These verses allowed Jesus to identify himself as the mighty

one anointed with the holy oil and promised God's strength, faithfulness, and mercy to be with him always. In verse 27 he is labeled the firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. Jesus undoubtedly found great comfort to have his relationship with his heavenly Father proclaimed in the Scriptures.

The necessity of a ransom is revealed in Psalm 49:7, "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." This psalm taught Jesus that no man could save himself or another; salvation was dependent upon a ransom. The proclamation of Psalm 118:22, "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner," confirmed to Jesus that he would be chief of all saints. Psalm 110:1,4 declares, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool .;. Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

### **Jesus' Response**

With all the reassurances through the psalms from the heavenly Father, Jesus expressed his understanding with his actions. He presented himself at the river Jordan fulfilling Psalm 40:7,8, "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will O my God; yea thy law is within my heart." This psalm was clearly written on his heart for he knew without hesitation that his will was one with the Father. The words of Psalm 2:7 must have rung loud and clear in his ears: "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." Jesus truly had the reassurance of his heavenly Father!

His determination to be at one with his Father is further confirmed as he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). The psalms, indeed, had provided the sure word and strength for Jesus to rise above the experience in full faith and trust.

### **Lessons from the Psalms**

During his ministry Jesus taught the multitudes. As he taught on one occasion he was interrupted with a message that his mother and brethren wished to speak with him. This was a perfect opportunity for Jesus to emphasize the unity of the body for as he swept his hand over the crowd he said, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matthew 12:49,50). The psalms proclaim, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee" (Psalm 22:22).

Another example of how Jesus learned from the psalms and then applied the lesson in his teachings is found in Luke 12:13-21. When Jesus was approached by a man who was concerned that his brother would not divide an inheritance fairly, Jesus offered a parable that emphasized the unimportance of earthly possessions. In verse 20 Jesus said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." These words are an echo of Psalm 49:16,17, "Be not thou afraid when one is made



rich, when the glory of his house is increased: for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him."

Jesus must have been familiar with the psalm that pointed to the betrayal of one he had chosen. As the events of the last supper progressed, Jesus said, "I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." Jesus must have been saddened when he realized the fulfillment of Psalm 41:9, "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." Yes, with Judas' betrayal, this psalm as a prophecy was fulfilled.

### **Wonderful Words**

Along with Jesus receiving knowledge and instruction regarding his future as the Messiah and ransom, came wonderful words of encouragement. He was assured of his prayer relationship with the heavenly Father in Psalm 55:22, "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Assurance of strength and God's overruling power in time of need is confirmed in Psalm 20:1,6: "The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee; Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand."

Just as Jesus found the Book of Psalms to be the inspired word of God which supplied full assurance of faith to complete his mission and fulfill his covenant of sacrifice, so is it true for all his footstep followers. Though fear, disappointment, and occasional failure may be encountered on the Christian path, the psalms offer warm assurance of forgiveness and encouragement. As the Christian listens intently to the harmony of the psalms, the message rings clear that one is never alone. As a psalm tugs at the heartstrings and the gnawing conscience is soothed, the sharp awareness occurs that fellow Christians are bonded together in the sharing of daily experiences frequently revealed in the psalms. The Book of Psalms is a gift from God; it provides a tool which permits his people to commune with him and be taught, guided, encouraged and assured of his great love and mercy.

"Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!"—Psalm 31:19

# The Musicians of Israel

*Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works.—1 Chronicles 16:9*

A verse by verse study in 1 Chronicles 25

Music has always played an important part in worship. As Albert Edersheim writes in his Bible History of the Old Testament, "the effect of music is to detach [us] from surrounding circumstances [and] to call forth strong feelings." Additionally, in a society where many were illiterate, music served as a memory aid. Songs sung in the temple worship services were thus not only devotional, but often instructional as well.

The earliest memories of a Jewish child would include the songs heard at the temple steps. Again, quoting Edersheim, "on those steps that led up to the innermost sanctuary the priests had lifted their hands and spoken over the people the words of blessing; and then, while the drink-offering was poured out, the Levites' chant of psalms had risen and swelled into a mighty volume; the exquisite treble of the Levite children's voices being sustained by the rich round notes of the men, and accompanied by instrumental music. The Jewish child knew many of these words. They had been the earliest songs he had heard — almost his first lesson when clinging as a "*taph*" to his mother." (Sketches of Jewish Life, page 87.) It was probably the mnemonic effect of the songs that made it an accompaniment to the messages of the prophets (1 Samuel 10:5).

The earliest mention of music in the Bible pre-dates the Noahic flood. The Bible informs us that Jubal, a descendant of Cain, "was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ" (Genesis 4:21). At least twelve different words are used in the Old Testament to describe the various instruments—two among the strings, five each in wind instruments and percussion. In later times, four additional instruments are found in the book of Daniel.

The use of the Hebrew words *alamoth* ("in the manner of maidens") and *sheminith* ("in the lower octave") in the title of the psalms indicates that certain songs were composed for female voices and others for the masculine tenor and bass tones (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia). Though both sopranos and basses sang together, their singing was antiphonal with each part carrying the melody line.

Harmonization was a development of far later times. Since the word *sheminith* indicates an eighth, or octave, it suggests that the Hebrews used the eight-note scale that is common to most music today. The word *Selah*, so common in the psalms, is evidently a musical notation indicating either a pause or a musical interlude. Some of the psalms were written for one kind of instrument, and others for another. The same was true in the selection of voices for the singing of the psalms.

Although David is often thought of as the author of the psalms, many of them were written by other hands. Some date back as early as Moses, others to Hezekiah, and still others appear to be post-exilic, notably Psalm 137 which speaks of the Israelite's exile in Babylon. The most prolific song-writer appears to be King Solomon who is credited with writing some 1,005 songs, probably including the Song of Solomon (1 Kings 4:32).

It was King David, however, who formalized the use of music into the worship services of Israel. The Levites were the temple employees. They numbered 36,000. More than ten percent of the Levites were assigned to the task of performing music in the temple. There were four thousand singers. These were supported from the tithing of the children of Israel and from the temple tax. At today's minimum wage, the budget for singers alone would be over \$40 million dollars annually. However, since they were ordered into twenty-four courses, it is probable that they were only paid for the time involved in temple service. The rest of the time they would farm the areas surrounding the Levitical cities (Leviticus 25:34). The appointment of these singers is the subject matter of 1Chronicles chapter 25.

### **The Appointment of the Singers—Verses 1 to 6**

*Moreover David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals: and the number of the workmen according to their service was: Of the sons of Asaph; Zaccur, and Joseph, and Nethaniah, and Asarelah, the sons of Asaph under the hands of Asaph, which prophesied according to the order of the king. Of Jeduthun: the sons of Jeduthun; Gedaliah, and Zeri, and Jeshaiiah, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six, under the hands of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with a harp, to give thanks and to praise the LORD. Of Heman: the sons of Heman; Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shebuel, and Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, and Romamtiezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, and Mahazioth: All these were the sons of Heman the king's seer in the words of God, to lift up the horn. And God gave to Heman fourteen sons and three daughters. All these were under the hands of their father for song in the house of the LORD, with cymbals, psalteries, and harps, for the service of the house of God, according to the king's order to Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman.*

Three families are placed in charge of the temple musicians. These correspond to the three sons of Levi himself: Asaph being a descendent of Gershon, Jeduthun of Merari, and Heman of Kohath. It is also interesting to note that Heman is the grandson of the prophet Samuel (1 Chronicles 6:33). His father, Joel, was Samuel's firstborn and noted for his wickedness (1 Samuel 8:2,3). Heman, however, appears to have reverted to the righteous ways of his grandfather and was known as one of the wisest of men in the days of Solomon (1 Kings 4:30,31). He was also the most blessed with children, having fourteen sons and three daughters. Presumably these were also assigned to temple singing.

In his commentary, Matthew Henry says "it is probable that Heman, Asaph, and Jeduthun, were bred up [tutored] under Samuel, and had their education in the schools of

the prophets which he was the founder and president of; then they were pupils, now they came to be masters." This may explain why each of the three, in addition to the title of musician, also bears the title of seer, or prophet.

Specific psalms are attributed to each of these three heads of the families of the singers. In this regard, Asaph is the most prominent, with twelve psalms to his credit (Psalms 50 and 73 to 83). Jeduthun is mentioned in Psalms 39 and 77, while Heman is only mentioned in the title of Psalm 88. It is probable, however, that these were not the composers of these particular psalms but rather they were composed to be sung or played by their musicians. A strong indication of this is that Psalm 74, ascribed to Asaph, appears to have been written during the Babylonian captivity, several hundred years after the death of Asaph. Psalm 74:7,8 refers to the temple sanctuary being put to the flames. The only time this happened in the biblical record was by the forces of Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 52:13).

The mentioning of three specific instruments in 1 Chronicles 25:1,6 is probably meant to stand for all the instruments then extant—the cymbals for percussion, the harp for the strings, and the psalteries (probably a primitive form of the bagpipe) for the winds. The sons of Jeduthun appear to have specialized in the strings and those of Heman in the wind instruments.

While the Bible does not record where this temple singing was to take place, Edersheim in his *Sketches of Jewish Life*, places them on the steps to the sanctuary. These are the predecessors for the cantors in many of today's Jewish worship services.

### **Teachers and Students—Verses 7 and 8**

*So the number of them, with their brethren that were instructed in the songs of the LORD, even all that were cunning, was two hundred fourscore and eight. And they cast lots, ward against ward, as well the small as the great, the teacher as the scholar.*

The Revised Standard Version translates verse 8, "And they cast lots for their duties, small and great, teacher and pupil alike." The selection was to be done by lot to avoid any favoritism by the ones doing the choosing. All were to be used, whether prominent or not, whether skilled teachers or novice students. Although the Hebrew word *mishmeret*, translated "ward" in the KJV, usually refers to guards or watchmen, the lexicon by Brown, Driver, and Riggs lists "function" as one meaning of the word.

The 288 "cunning men" are apparently the most skilled in the musical arts. The remaining 3,712 Levitical singers were under their direction. We might think of the smaller number as choir-masters or conductors. Since these were divided into the same 24 divisions as their teachers, there were approximately 155 individuals assigned to sing in the temple at all times.

## The Twenty-Four Courses—Verses 9 to 31

*Now the first lot came forth for Asaph to Joseph: the second to Gedaliah, who with his brethren and sons were twelve: The third to Zaccur, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: The fourth to Izri, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: The fifth to Nethaniah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: The sixth to Bukkiah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: The seventh to Jesharelah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: The eighth to Jeshaiiah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: The ninth to Mattaniah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: The tenth to Shimei, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: The eleventh to Azareel, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: The twelfth to Hashabiah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: The thirteenth to Shubael, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: The fourteenth to Mattithiah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: The fifteenth to Jeremoth, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: The sixteenth to Hananiah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: The seventeenth to Joshbekashah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: The eighteenth to Hanani, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: The nineteenth to Mallothi, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: The twentieth to Eliathah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: The one and twentieth to Hothir, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: The two and twentieth to Giddalti, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: The three and twentieth to Mahazioth, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve: The four and twentieth to Romantiezzer, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve.*

All of the Levitical services were divided by David into twenty-four consecutive courses. It is unclear whether their terms were two weeks each once a year or one week each twice a year. There were 24 courses of the priesthood and 24 courses of the porters (guards or door-keepers) as well as the 24 courses of the singers. (The same number is picked up in the book of Revelation as 24 elders.) Only the 6,000 appointed as "officers and judges" (1 Chronicles 23:4) apparently served year round. The number is curious since it does not evenly divide into the 52 weeks of the year nor into the traditional 30-day month used by the Hebrews. It is, however, exactly twice the number of tribes of Israel, and thus is suggestive of a shadow representation of restoration to the 12 tribes.

Lot	Asaph	Jeduthun	Heman
1	Joseph		
2		Gedaliah	
3	Zaccur		
4		Izri	
5	Nethaniah		
6			Bukkiah
7	Jesharelah		
8		Jeshaiah	
9			Mattaniah
10	Shimei *		
11			Azareel
12		Hashabiah	
13			Shubael
14		Mattithiah	
15			Jeremoth
16			Hananiah
17			Joshbekashah
18			Hanani
19			Mallothi
20			Eliathah
21			Hothir
22			Giddalti
23			Mahazioth
24			Romamtiezer

---

\* Shimei is assumed to be the fourth son of Jeduthun since 2 Chronicles 25:3 mentions his six sons while only naming five of them. The other variations are standard Hebrew alternative spellings for the names listed in the first six verses of the chapter.

The selection of the courses was done by lot. Probably the lots were not totally random, but seem to have been three urns for the lots—one each for Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman. This would account for the orderly course of progression between the three families. Asaph received the first, third, fifth and seventh places, alternating with Jeduthun, who had the second and fourth lots as well as the eighth, twelfth, and fourteenth. This

alternated him with Heman who had the sixth, ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth places. The balance of lots fell to Heman because he was the only one with descendents sufficient to fill them. This division is illustrated in the chart on the previous page.

The use of music, then, became a major feature of temple services. In the New Testament, the apostles admonish the Christian to not only employ music in his worship but to carry the matter still deeper—to have melody in the heart. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19). James states that, if any is merry, "let him sing psalms" (James 5:13). But songs need not be reserved for times of joy. We note the strength of faith of Paul and Silas who sang in their prison chains. "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them" (Acts 16:25).

What rejoicing shall there be to those who, singing in joys and singing in sorrows, finally secure their victory and join in a choir of 144,000 to sing God's praises for eternity. "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest." —Revelation 15:2-4

Echoes from the Past \*

## The Psalms and Sacred Songs

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.—Colossians 3:16*

W. A. Eliason

To those who seek "the old paths" (Jeremiah 6:16) the Scripture at the head of this article is significant, for from it we learn something regarding the worship of the church in the days of the apostles. Our text not only proves that congregational singing was apart of the worship of the believers, but it gives a brief description of the hymnody of the apostolic church—that it consisted of "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs."

The writer proposes to first give a brief history of Christian hymnody, in order to show how the apostle's admonition has been followed (and disregarded); then to point out our rich legacy of songs—the inspired as well as those of human composition—and finally to offer a few practical thoughts on our text.

### Hymnody of the Early Church

In the New Testament the references to singing are not numerous but they are interesting. Only from the familiar words "When they had sung an hymn" (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26) do we know that our Lord himself sang, though we would expect him to follow the custom of the Jews, who sang some of the psalms in their temple worship and at the Passover meal. In the prison at Philippi Paul and Silas "sang praises unto God" at midnight (Acts 16:25). St. James says: "Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise" (James 5:13, RSV). To the church at Corinth St. Paul writes: "When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm" (or one of the other spiritual gifts) (1 Corinthians 14:26). The psalm sung on that occasion was evidently not congregational singing, but a solo rendering of an inspired hymn, for it would not require a special gift of the spirit to sing (or recite) a Scripture Psalm. We realize, of course, that with the passing away of the "charismatic gifts" that kind of psalmody would cease, though such "psalms" (or some of them) may have been preserved for use in the church.

The hymnody that remained in the church is that described by the apostle in our text. As to manner, we infer that the singing was congregational and in unison. As to subject matter, it consisted of "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." The "psalms" were doubtless some from that cherished heritage of the Jewish church, the Book of Psalms, mainly the



inspired work of David, "the sweet singer of Israel." In the Hebrew these would be familiar to Jewish Christians, and others would likely use the Greek version of them in the Septuagint. The Greek word rendered "psalm" literally means "a striking of musical strings" (Abbott-Smith), while the original Hebrew word means praise. According to its Greek derivation the word "hymn" also denotes a song of praise (to God). The third word used by St. Paul, "song" (or ode), is a general word for any kind of song, but the apostle qualifies it by the word "spiritual," restricting the meaning to sacred song. Unlike the Psalms, which were Scripture, the "hymns and spiritual songs" were human compositions, but since these were "offered to Christ" they were germane to the new dispensation, and from the first age of the church had their rightful place in the Christian hymnody. They were needed to supplement the Psalms; for a new salvation called for "a new song."

### **In the Middle Ages**

In the writings of the Greek and Latin Fathers there are many references to singing in the church and the composing of hymns. One of the earliest of these, Clement of Alexandria, who wrote in the latter half of the second century, is thought by some to have been the author of the hymn appended to one of his writings. If true, this is possibly the oldest Christian hymn extant. The ancient Latin doxology Gloria in Excelsis, which is still in use, is ascribed to the third or fourth century. From all accounts that have come down to us, there was in those early centuries no lack of hymns and for about three centuries the common people had the right to sing them in the church service. Then the night began to set in.

The Synod of Laodicea in the year 363 decreed that (a) "Psalms composed by private men" must not be used in the church, and (b) "None but appointed singers shall sing in church." Eventually these two rules became virtually the law in both branches of the Catholic Church. Toward the end of the fourth century Ambrose (bishop of Milan) composed some hymns in Latin, which had limited use; for four centuries they were not accepted at Rome in spite of their considerable merit. The circumstances that the psalms were commonly in Greek and Latin effectively barred the "laity" from singing them.

### **In the Reformation**

When the Reformation of the sixteenth century dawned, each of the leading reformers was faced with such questions as: What about singing in the church? and, What is there for the people to sing? Each reformer solved the problem of the hymnody in his own way; for they were divided on the question.

Martin Luther was best equipped to cope with the problem, for he was both a poet and a musician. He loved the Latin psalms but he wished to give the people songs in German. Accordingly, he wrote the stirring "*Eine Feste Burg*" ("A Mighty Fortress") and other hymns. The Lutherans did not wait long for a serviceable hymnbook; their great leader saw to that. Luther retained the Latin psalms of the Catholic Church, but also translated

some of their metrical hymns, and in addition he composed others. He gave as his authority St. Paul's words of our text, and the practice of the early church.

John Calvin handled the matter differently, in his position as leader of the Swiss reformation at Geneva. His language and that of his followers was French, so he provided metrical versions of the psalms in French. For this undertaking he enlisted the services of the French court-poet Clement Marot, who translated most of the psalms for Calvin's hymnbook. Unlike Luther, Calvin used only the psalms in his book; also he banished the organ from the church. Luther liked singing in part-harmony; Calvin insisted that the singing be in unison. At that time a musician named Louis Bourgeois was living at Geneva; to him the Reformer turned for help, and Bourgeois composed most of the tunes for the Genevan Psalter of 1551. One of the melodies in that famous old hymnbook was the deservedly popular chorale tune now known as "Old Hundred," to which is sung Wm. Kethe's metrical version of the hundredth Psalm, which he composed in the middle of the sixteenth century. In the Genevan Psalter, however, that tune was used with the 134th Psalm.

Another prominent Swiss reformer, Zwingli, dealt drastically with the problem of church hymnody; he ruled out all singing in his church at Zurich—even the singing of the psalms! Strangely enough, this able and zealous leader contended that preaching and hearing are the only proper worship, and he allowed little else than that. This attitude can only be understood as a strong reaction to Catholic practice, in which music had displaced the ministry of the Word.

### **Hymnody of English and Scottish Churches**

In the British Isles the influence of Luther and Calvin inspired similar efforts to provide a Psalter and a hymnbook in the English language. As a result the Psalter came first, with its metrical versions which were provided with such tunes as were available, most of which would probably in our day be considered quite dull. The Genevan melodies had become popular in other European countries, but they had been composed for the French meter and they were found difficult to adapt to the English metrical psalms, which explains the little use made of them. The English Psalter was soon followed by editions of "hymns and spiritual songs," this enlargement marking a new era in English hymnody. Although this era was inaugurated amid much controversy and disruption, it brought great enrichment in the sphere of sacred song to succeeding generations of Christians, including ourselves.

The first great name appearing in the history of this movement is that of Isaac Watts, an independent minister of great talent who became prominent at the beginning of the eighteenth century. In bodily stature Dr. Watts was a small man (little over five feet), but he was a giant among the writers of sacred verse. Not satisfied with existing conditions this bold spirit called for a "new deal" in English hymnology, and offered his talents in its service. Watts thought it wrong to use only the psalms in the hymnody and he proposed a new "system of praise," which would include "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." He put the matter to a test; his own published hymns found acceptance with the people, and

the battle was won. It was the viewpoint of Luther versus that of Calvin. Luther's won. Many of Dr. Watts' hymns are still in general use, and as they are so well known it is not necessary to list them here. Among the most famous of them doubtless are "O God, our help in ages past" and "When I survey the wondrous cross."

Isaac Watts was "the father of English hymnology," but he was the first of an illustrious group of English hymn writers of the eighteenth century. Of these the limits of this article will allow only the briefest mention, but they all made important contributions to our hymnody.

Charles Wesley was the great hymnist of the Methodist movement. He is said to have written over 6500 songs, some among the finest in our language. Some of the best loved of them are: "Love divine, all loves excelling," "Hark, the herald angels sing," and "Jesus, lover of my soul." Of Wesley's great talent for verse it has been said that Charles and his brother John came from a remarkable family; they were reared in the very atmosphere of poetry. It seemed to come naturally to them.

A noted contemporary of the Wesleys was August Toplady, a Calvinist minister and poet. Toplady's best contribution to our hymnbook was his "Rock of Ages," a hymn that ranks with the most popular of all time, and has been translated into many languages. It has been said that Christians in Armenia went down singing this inspiring hymn when they were slaughtered by the Turks. There is food for thought in the fact that though Charles Wesley and Toplady were poles apart on the doctrine of election (and even engaged in controversy over it), this did not prevent these sincere men from using their great talent for the blessing of all Christians everywhere.

Two other hymn writers of that period must be noticed in even such a brief sketch as this. William Cowper and John Newton together produced the "Olney Hymns," among which were some gems, such as Cowper's "There is a fountain" and Newton's "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds."

### **Brought to the New World**

When the Pilgrim Fathers landed at Plymouth in 1620 they brought with them the best of English hymnody as it was at that early period. Hymns have always given solace and strength to the persecuted and these Puritans were a singing people, as described by Felicia Hemans in her well-known poem: "Not as the flying come In silence and in fear:— They shook the depths of the desert gloom With their hymns of lofty cheer."

What were their hymns? What hymnbook did the Pilgrims use? Certainly not our hymnal, for this was fifty years before Isaac Watts was born! We cannot doubt that the hymns used were the versified psalms in the Sternhold and Hopkins version, which was used in England at that time. This, then, was the foundation of Christian hymnody in America, which here too, as elsewhere, was enlarged in after years by the addition of "hymns and spiritual songs," though not without controversy and opposition particularly from those who held to the practice of Calvin.

## **Our Hymnbook**

Christians of our day have indeed a rich legacy in their hymnbook. The typical hymnal contains a cross section of the best in sacred verse that sanctified and talented men have written—from Isaac Watts down—and even earlier, for the familiar "Doxology" is ascribed to Thomas Ken who died in 1711.

Our hymnbook is the work of many men—and of many women too. Though in the Lord's arrangement women have been shut out from some fields of service, this is certainly not true of Christian hymnology for so many of our most popular and spiritual hymns are the work of talented women. Only a few can be mentioned here: Adelaide Pollard's "Have Thine own way, Lord"; Elizabeth Prentiss' "More love to Thee, O Christ"; and the many fine hymns of the blind poetess, Fanny J. Crosby, such as "Jesus, keep me near the cross," "Blessed assurance," and "Thou my everlasting portion."

Catholics as well as Protestants are represented among our hymn writers, as J. H. Newman who wrote "Lead kindly Light," and F. W. Faber to whom we owe "There's a wideness in God's mercy" and "Faith of our fathers"—the latter revised considerably by Protestant editors.

And finally, although the words of our hymns are most important, we realize that without the tunes we could not sing them, therefore we must give credit to those who have given us the melodies. It is evident that the development of melody has kept pace with the improvement in verse, for in our hymn tunes there are reminiscences of the "plainsong" commonly used in the medieval church service, and of the stately chorales which Luther did so much to develop—along with the more modern type of hymn tune.

## **Outward and Inward Song**

In our text St. Paul says: "Let the Word dwell in you richly"; we ought not to be content with a smaller measure. In whatever other respects we might suffer from poverty, in the word of Christ we can be rich. Another lesson given is that our hymns can be a vehicle of instruction, as well as of admonition. To be a suitable means of instruction our hymns need to be free of error; this would seem to justify the rather common practice of revising the original text of some hymns. This practice ("hymn tinkering" some call it) has no doubt been to some extent a source of annoyance, and its ethics have been questioned. But it would seem to this writer that here the end justifies the means, and that many a fine hymn has had a wider use in the church because an objectionable word or phrase was changed.

If the Word dwells in us richly it will find spontaneous expression in song—in the meeting and in the home. God's people are a singing people. In Ephesians 5:19 St. Paul writes: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." From these words we see that when the true Christian sings there are in reality two songs—the outward song upon his lips and the inward song in his heart. An unbeliever, if he has a fine voice, may sing a hymn

beautifully but in that case the inward song, the "melody in the heart" will not be there. The least musical Christian, on the other hand, though he may sing a hymn a bit off key or have trouble following the rhythm of the tune, will, if living up to his privileges, have in his heart that melody of thanksgiving and praise to which the Lord listens.

\* Reprinted from the January 1973 issue of *The Herald*.

## A Man Who Made Melody to the Lord\*

# Asaph the Chief Musician

*For in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God.—Nehemiah 12:46*

Albert O. Hudson

Asaph was a great choir-master; so great that his name lingered on for many generations after his death and in all Israel's after history the Temple singers were known as "sons of Asaph." Here was a man whose talents and whole life were consecrated to God and used in one particular direction, in the ministry of sacred song. Who knows how many hearts in Israel were turned more reverently toward the God of Israel, and how many minds to the more sober consideration of the Covenant and their responsibilities as a chosen and separated people to God, in consequence of that ministry? The ascending of praise and thanksgiving to God is a very lovely thing in Divine worship; and it is more than that. The heart's devotion can rise to heaven on the wings of song, and the renewal, the re-affirming, of one's own consecration can be carried to God by the voice of thanksgiving. It is a part of the service in which all can join and express for themselves in their own way the love and gratitude they feel for all his benefits. Sometimes a speaker, anxious to conserve as much of the time allotted to the service as he can for his address, requests that one of the hymns be omitted, or the long ones shortened. He does not well who does so. The Father looks upon the praises and prayers of his people in their gathering together with as much interest and sympathy as he does upon the ministry of the spoken word and, who knows, maybe he gets less weary of listening to the praise and thanksgiving of the congregation than he does of the sometimes overlong perorations delivered in his name by the minister.

Asaph lived in the days of David. He must have found in that king a very ready sympathizer with his services and a quick readiness to make use of his characteristic talents. David himself in his younger and—who knows—happier days had been a singer and a poet. As a shepherd lad he had whiled away many a pleasant hour on the hillside, while the sun shone warmly down, composing and singing simple songs of praise to God. In later years, when in the service of King Saul, he played the harp and sang the same songs to his own accompaniment. Now, with all the cares of state pressing on his shoulders and the claims of several wives to satisfy he probably had less time for such direct indulgence in his musical tastes; but when he came to organizing the worship of God he remembered the charm that music had always had for him, and realizing what it could mean in the worship of Israel, he looked around for a suitable man to place in charge of such things and found a twin soul in Asaph.

It was when King David had brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem after its long sojourn in the house of Obed-edom, following its capture by the Philistines in the days of Eli two generations earlier, that Asaph received his appointment. According to 1

Chronicles 16:4, 5, David had "appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the Ark of the Lord, and to record, and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel: Asaph the chief." As the account goes on we find that there were players on psalteries and harps, and priests with trumpets, and Asaph himself, in addition to his duty of leading the choir, "made a sound with cymbals." It seems evident that this Temple music was by no means a subdued affair; more likely is it that it bore some distinct resemblance to the Salvation Army bands of our own day. But the Lord blessed it; that is the important thing. He blessed it! That is a point to remember when we feel disposed to decry and condemn a form of service which some others are conducting to the Lord's glory but a form which does not appeal to ourselves. The Lord's arm is not so short—nor his imagination so limited—that he is compelled to confine himself to just one way of doing his work and although we do tend to flatter ourselves that we are the only ones who understand his Plan and therefore the only ones entitled to work for him or to speak in his name, there is plenty of evidence to the unbiased observer that the Lord does find use for many of the efforts put forth by Christian disciples of many differing theologies despite the shortcomings of some of them as respects a clear vision of his Plan.

Now Asaph was not only a musician, he was also a prophet. He must have been a very self-effacing one, for there is no mention of the fact during the time of his own life. Perhaps the greater glory of his royal patron obliterated any lesser radiance that might have shone from the Chief Musician. But in the days of Hezekiah, several centuries later, there is a casual reference which goes to show that his prophetic office was remembered equally with his musical skill. 2 Chronicles 29:30 tells us, in connection with Hezekiah's restoration of the Temple service after the idolatry of Ahaz, that "Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped."

So Asaph was a seer—a prophet! In his musical preoccupation he found time to study the Word of the Lord and to become a fit medium through which the holy spirit could speak. What would be the subjects of his prophecy? Without much doubt he would prophesy, as did all the prophets, concerning the King and the Kingdom, and the conditions of entrance into that Kingdom. Like all the prophets, he would speak of Judgment and Restitution, and call the people to repentance and dedication of life to God's service to consecration. How would he speak to them? Surely through the medium of his sacred office! Not for Asaph the free, unrestricted wandering through the countryside in the manner of Amos the herdsman or Joel the vine-dresser. Not for Asaph the standing in the royal court in the company of princes and politicians of this world, like Isaiah or Daniel. His duties kept him in the place where daily worship was being constantly offered, and it was there, and in the course of that worship and those duties, that his prophecy, if it was to be given at all, must be uttered. And therefore it is that for the prophecies of Asaph we must look into the psalms of Asaph.

## The Psalms of Asaph

They are twelve in number, these psalms which are accredited to David's chief musician. Some have suggested that they might not all actually be from Asaph; that the structure of at least one seems to indicate a composition of a much later date, but there is really little or no evidence to support such hypotheses. These twelve, Psalm 50 and Psalms 73 to 83 inclusive, are entitled "Psalms of Asaph," and there is every reason for concluding that we have here compositions that are the work of this fervent-hearted Levite, set to music and rendered under his direction by the sacred choir in the days of David. And being a prophet, what more natural than that he should incorporate in these songs the understanding that the holy spirit had given him?

It would take many pages to exhaust the doctrinal and prophetic teaching left on record in the twelve psalms that enshrine the ministry of Asaph. A few brief allusions must suffice. And no such short survey can start on a more appropriate theme than the one which led Asaph to compose the 73rd Psalm—the Permission of Evil. Not exactly a doctrine, as we understand the term today, perhaps, but how vital a foundation for our own orderly and satisfying appreciation of the Divine mysteries. "I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked," he says (Psalm 73:3). "They are not in trouble as other men .;. they have more than heart could wish .;. and they say `how doth God know?' .;. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; THEN UNDERSTOOD I THEIR END." Ah, yes, that is where we, too, understand why God has permitted evil, and that he will not allow evil and the evil-doer to continue for ever. It is in this psalm, too, that Asaph coined a phrase that has been an inestimable source of encouragement to the disciples of Jesus in all the centuries of this Gospel Age: "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalm 73:24).

It must have been this realization of God's determination to vindicate the righteous in due time that led Asaph to the train of thought revealed in Psalm 77. "I have considered the days of old," he says, "the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night; I commune with my own heart; and my spirit made diligent search. Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever. .;. hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Then, in a swift revulsion of feeling, "I will remember the works of the Lord. I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of all thy doings." In the study and consideration of the Plan of God as revealed in his past action's Asaph found both consolation and instruction to explain the apparent inactivity of God. "Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary" (verse 13). That was the great lesson and it is so still with us. The teaching of this psalm is the overruling providence of God and his wise direction of events for the ultimate good of all men. He is leading them through many strange and hard experiences that they might learn at last the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and come willingly and voluntarily in harmony with God's righteousness. "Thou leddest thy people like a flock," are the concluding words of the psalm. To the doctrine of the Permission of Evil therefore we have to add the doctrine of Divine Providence that doeth all things well.



The next theme to which Asaph devoted his talents was that of Divine Judgment, and here two of his Psalms, 82 and 83, share the burden of the song. "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods," is the tremendous opening of Psalm 82. None of all created beings are exempt from God's judgment if so be that sin has entered and found a lodgment. Even though they be called gods, children of the Most High, they will die like men, and fall like one of the princes, should the contaminating effects of sin so demand. If wicked men take counsel against the people of God, and say (Psalm 83:4) "Come, let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance," he will rise up and cause them to scatter and be no more, as the rolling leaves and dust before the whirlwind, twisting and twirling about in the terrible blast of his anger (verses 13-15). And Asaph saw clearly—so clearly—that the final effect of Divine Judgment is "that men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth" (verse 18).

Now Asaph comes to prophecy. In Psalms 78, 79 and 80 he sings of God's chosen people Israel, of his goodness to them and their unfaithfulness to him. "Give ear, O my people," he cries, "to my law. Incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old" (Psalm 78:1,2). Then he sings of the great deeds of old, the victories and triumphs of Israel in the wilderness, the continued faithfulness of God in face of the persistent unfaithfulness of Israel. So, at last, "he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel; so that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh .;. and delivered strength into captivity." But when God saw the distress into which his people had fallen, and how the enemies of righteousness exulted over the sorry state of those who despite all their faults and all their failures and all their perversities were still the people of God, then "the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine, and he smote his enemies .;. he put them to a perpetual reproach." What a wonderful commentary upon the Divine Plan it is to say, as Asaph here says, "so he fed them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands" (Psalm 78:72).

The song drops to a lower key. Asaph's prophetic insight showed him that in days yet to come, long after he himself would be sleeping with his fathers, there would be trouble and distress upon Israel because of renewed unfaithfulness. He saw a day in the which fierce Babylonian soldiers would come and despoil the city and the sanctuary, and take all the treasures thereof captive to Babylon. "O God," he cries in agony in the opening stanza of Psalm 74, "why hast thou cast us off for ever? Why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?" In vision he saw the Temple destroyed and lifted his voice in impassioned protest. "A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees. But now they break down the carved work thereof with axes and hammers.;. they have cast fire into thy sanctuary.;. they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land." But it is in this psalm that he rises up to a lofty plea for the fulfillment of God's Plan, a fulfillment which he knows is sadly needed because of the world's sin. "Have respect unto the covenant," he urges, "for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." Psalms 74 and 75 both reveal Asaph's knowledge that such a time of disaster must come upon Israel, and that it would be followed by judgment upon the nations that oppressed them. "In the hand of the Lord

there is a cup and the wine is red .;. the dregs thereof, the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them" (Psalm 75:8). So it is that in Psalm 76 he passes on to a brighter view of prophecy and glimpses something of the day of light and gladness that is to follow the overthrow of God's enemies. "When God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth—surely the wrath of men shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain" (Psalm 76:10). There is his faith in the coming Millennial Day, in those "Times of Restitution" which Peter, long centuries afterward, was to declare had been spoken of by all God's holy prophets. Asaph was one of those prophets.

It was in the 50th Psalm that the great singer attained his loftiest height of vision. In that wonderful paean of praise and prophecy he traverses briefly the whole of God's later works, succeeding that earlier phase when Israel after the flesh was the only instrument to God's hand. There in Psalm 50 Asaph has taken a mighty stride forward and sees the development of another Israel, gathered to God in another covenant, and in the ecstasy of that revelation he calls "gather thy saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice" (Psalm 50:5). Perhaps that last vision of all showed him the majesty and power of God more vividly than anything before. It was at any rate with this train of thought in his mind that he uttered the sublime words that we have used so often ourselves to describe the all-power of our Father and our God: "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills."

"Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me, and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God." The vibrant words die away into silence; the melody fades away in the distance. Asaph the singer, the musician of David's choir, is no more. He sleeps with his fellows, awaiting the call to enter that new world about which he so constantly spoke and sang; but his words live on after him, and we, three thousand years later, find strength and encouragement and inspiration because an obscure but zealous and earnest man of God, away in those far-off days, used his talent for music and poetry to sing praises to the God of his salvation.

# Selah

"The translators of the Bible have left the Hebrew word `Selah,' which occurs so often in the Psalms, as they found it, and of course the English reader often asks his minister, or learned friend, what it means. And the minister, or learned friend, has most often been obliged to confess ignorance, because it is a matter in regard to which the most learned have by no means been of one mind. The Targums, and most of the Jewish commentators, give to the word the meaning of eternally forever. Rabbi Kimchi regards it as a sign to elevate the voice. The authors of the Septuagint translation appear to have regarded it as a musical or rhythmical note. Hender regarded it as indicating a change of the note; Matheson as a musical note, equivalent perhaps, to the word repeat. According to Luther and others, it means silence! Gesenius explains it to mean, `Let the instrument play and the singer stop.' Wocher regards it as the equivalent to *sursum corda*—up, my soul! Sommer, after examining all the seventy-four passages in which the word occurs, recognizes in every case `an actual appeal or summons to Jehovah.' They are calls for aid and prayers to be heard, expressed either with entire directness, or if not in the imperative, `Hear, Jehovah!' or, `Awake, Jehovah!' and the like still earnest address to God that he would remember and hear, etc. The word itself he regards as indicating a blast of the trumpets by the priest. `Selah,' itself, he thinks an abridged expression, used for *Higgaion Selah*—*Higgaion* indicating the sound of the stringed instruments, and *Selah* a vigorous blast of trumpets."

—Attributed to the magazine *Bibliotheca Sacra* by P. L. Read  
in the March-April 1972 *Herald*

# The Psalms—Glad Songs of Praise

Read and cherished by many,  
A source of comfort and strength:  
There are Psalms for every occasion,  
Of varied content and length.

Most were written by David;  
They're filled with reverence and praise.  
From a heart of loving devotion  
He sings of God and His ways.

First portrayed are the righteous.  
These love the law of the Lord,  
Disregard the counsel of sinners,  
And trust in God for reward.

Victories, struggles, and failures—  
Our hearts relate to them all.  
How we need forgiveness and mercy  
For times we stumble and fall!

Psalms, like all of the Bible,  
Inspired of God, are far more  
Than a nice collection of writings  
Of human thinking and lore.

Precepts God has established  
Give light and long will endure.  
In the Psalms we learn that His statutes  
Are holy, righteous, and pure.

Many pictures are given:  
As sheep, our needs are supplied;  
In God's secret place we find refuge;  
What joy to safely abide!

Psalms speak much of our Savior.  
His dying thoughts were foretold;  
They describe the work he's now doing,  
And what the future will hold.

Mighty mountains will topple,  
The restless waves will not cease

Till the King enthroned on Mt. Zion  
Enforces justice and peace.

Clear prophetic fulfillments  
Of widespread growing unrest:  
As we see them herald Christ's Kingdom,  
Our hearts are gladdened and blessed.

Weeping then will be over;  
Eternal joy will be found.  
When men love and serve their Creator,  
Glad songs of praise will resound!

—Elaine L. Redeker