

Theology on *the Web.org.uk*

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes.
Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit
or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the
copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the
ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the
links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbadshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

But the mind of Christendom was not ready for his message. There was many a sad lesson to be learnt before Western Europe could reconcile itself to the failure of the conciliar method of reform. And when a hundred years later another and a more powerful leader came, he learnt his methods for himself and not from Huss's work. Yet Luther recognised the power and purity of the treatment of Scripture by the earlier reformer, and wrote to Spalatin : " We are all unconscious Hussites."

Huss had not the power which was in Luther, and came too soon to use it to such purpose as Luther did, even if he had possessed it. He was a herald and a forerunner of the Reformation. It is never easy, it is seldom possible, to gauge with accuracy the effect of the herald's advent. He does his work and passes on his way, well-nigh forgotten in the greater glory of those whose coming it is his duty to announce. But he prepares the minds of men, and leaves behind him as he goes a keenly-expectant multitude. So it was with Huss. That man in any case has done a noble life's work, and left a noble heritage behind him, of whom, as of Huss, it may be said that with an unfailing trust in the God of righteousness and in the Jesus of the Gospels he sought to know the truth.

H. B. COLCHESTER.

ART. VI.—WAR-HYMNS, OLD AND NEW.

IN a passage much quoted of late as a salve to uneasy consciences, Mr. Ruskin has declared that, according to his study of history, "All great nations learned their truth of word and strength of thought in war," and that "War is the foundation of all the arts," as it is also "the foundation of all the high virtues and faculties of men."¹

Probably we shall be unwilling, without considerable qualification, to endorse such an assertion as this. War must always be terrible. We cannot lightly become its apologists. But it is some alleviation to think that from what is undoubtedly an evil, good may yet spring forth, and it can scarcely be denied that a time of war calls forth in a marvellous degree some of the higher virtues, such as heroism, patriotism, and self-sacrifice. Nor can it be denied that some of the greatest creations of the human brain have had their birth in stirring times, when the mind was set on fire by contemporary events. From Homer downwards, many of our great poems have been inspired by warfare. The age of

¹ "Crown of Wild Olive," vol. iii., pp. 87-95.

chivalry was the age of poetry. Shakespeare, Scott, and Byron were the product of warlike times. "Maud" was the child of the Crimea. If all the secular poetry that has been created by warfare were to be eliminated the world would be poorer for its loss.

It is more difficult to trace the influence of warfare on religious poetry. It cannot, on the whole, be said that war has produced very much result in sacred song; and indeed, since the Gospel is the Gospel of peace, it is scarcely to be expected that it should. But yet evidence is not wanting that times of deep national anxiety and distress have sometimes quickened the poetic genius of religious writers, and certainly there are numerous instances where the strains of a familiar hymn have inspired armies with the courage that comes of faith. The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) was the generative era of German hymnology. "The untold misery which that fearful war entailed upon Germany stimulated the production of a more subjective and experimental type of sacred poetry, and multiplied the hymns of the cross. Over a hundred hymnals gave a glory to the hymnology of the Fatherland, to which there is no analogy in any country until the revival, in the next century, of hymn-writing in England."¹

The earliest war-hymn of note is the Song of Moses upon the victory by the Red Sea. Later on, many of the finest compositions in the Book of Psalms were written under the stress of war, either in the stirring times of David or amid the crushing agonies of the later Assyrian invasions. Indeed, the Book of Psalms has ever supplied war-songs for Christian soldiers, and with some historic battles certain Psalms will always be associated.

Psalm lxviii., "Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered," is pre-eminently a war-cry for fighting men. It was sung at the Battle of Arques, near Dieppe, in 1589, when the little army of the French King, Henry IV., was in danger of being overwhelmed by the far larger host of their enemies. "Come, M. le Ministre," cried the King to his chaplain, "lift the Psalm. It is full time." Then, we are told, "Over all the din the austere melody of the sixty-eighth Psalm marked the stately tramp of the soldiers. . . At that moment a fog which had rolled in from the sea cleared suddenly away, and the King's artillerymen could take aim. The swing of the Psalm was timed by the long roll of the guns, and the victory was won."²

¹ Julian, "Dictionary of Hymnology," p. 415.

² Archbishop of Armagh, "Witness of the Psalms," p. 253.

The version used on this occasion was a free paraphrase by Clement Marot, whose Psalms were equally popular with both Catholics and Huguenots. It ran thus:

“Que Dieu se montre seulement
Et l'on verra soudainement
Abandonner la place ;
Le camp des ennemis épars,
Et ses haines de toutes parts
Fuis devant sa face.”

The same Psalm was heard later among those who in many respects were the English counterpart of the Huguenots. At the Battle of Dunbar we are told¹ that, as the sun rose above the ocean, the battle-song of the Psalmist was heard from Cromwell and his soldiers: “Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered.”

Psalm xcv., the *Venite*, was the chant of the Templars, the Knights of the Red Cross, as they entered into battle with the Saracens, though it does not appear particularly suitable.

Psalm cxv., “Not unto us, O Lord,” was the hymn of the victors at Bannockburn.

At Agincourt, also, we are told that the same Psalm expressed the armies’ gratitude to the God of victory, the whole body of the troops kneeling down together on the muddy ground and singing it in unison, while even the wounded joined in the song. To this reference is found in Shakespeare’s “Henry V.” (Act II., Scene 8), where the warrior King after the battle is made to address his army thus:

“Do we all holy rites ;
Let there be sung *Non nobis* and *Tu Deum*.”

Psalm xlvi., “God is our refuge and strength,” has always been a favourite with men in special peril. The German version, the celebrated hymn of Luther, “Ein’ feste Burg,” with which he and his comrades entered Worms, has been called the “Marseillaise” of the Reformation, and Gustavus Adolphus caused it to be sung on the field by his whole army before the Battles of Leipsic (1631) and Lutzen (1632).

An English version of the same Psalm was sung in somewhat different surroundings after the Battle of Naseby.

Both Houses of Parliament, it is recorded, attended a thanksgiving service at Grey Friars’ Church, and dined together later in the Grocers’ Hall. After dinner they sang Psalm xlvi. Times have changed since, and we can scarcely imagine the Lords and Commons concluding a public dinner in this fashion, nor in the hall of a City company a hymn thus sung by a united audience after the turtle and champagne.

¹ Carlyle, “Oliver Cromwell,” vol. iii., p. 49.

It is somewhat surprising that martial hymns are scarcely to be found in Latin hymnology. Compositions of the type of our "Onward, Christian soldiers," where military language is applied to spiritual combat, are common enough in modern hymn-books, but in Latin hymnology the solitary, distinctly soldier's hymn is said to be "Pugnate Christi Milites," found in the Breviary of Chalons-sur-Marne, 1736. The translation "Soldiers who are Christ's below" is familiar to English readers. Some famous Latin hymns of earlier date, however, are associated with warfare, though the allusions are remote or indistinct. The *Te Deum*, for instance, as in the Battle of Agincourt, to which reference has already been made, has generally been and is still used to celebrate any signal victory. Upon the relief of Ladysmith a service was held, at which both the rescued and their rescuers were present, and the *Te Deum* was solemnly sung as a hymn of thankfulness to Him who had brought about the great deliverance. Another Latin hymn used in war time is the famous "Media vita in morte sumus," generally supposed, though the authorship is disputed, to have been written by the Swiss monk Notker about 900 A.D. A rendering of it remains in the Funeral Service of the Church of England, "In the midst of life we are in death," etc. Though it has disappeared from the services of the Roman Catholic Church, its use was universal in the Middle Ages, and Bassler, in his "Altchristliche Lieder," asserts that it was used as a war-song by the priests accompanying the hosts before and during battle.

To pass from Latin to English hymnology, one of the earliest English war-hymns, if not the first, is by Isaac Watts, the author of "O God, our help in ages past" (1719). It is based on Psalm xx., and its title is, "Prayer and Hope of Victory." It runs :

"Now may the God of power and grace
Attend His people's humble cry."

Toplady (1740-78), the author of "Rock of Ages," wrote a "Prayer for Peace":

"Oh, show Thyself the Prince of peace,
Command the din of war to cease;
With sacred love the world inspire,
And burn its chariots in the fire."

Neither of these hymns, however, possesses any special merit, or is likely to remain. The Rev. John Hampden Gurney published (1838) a war-hymn,

"Through centuries of sin and woe,"

which has appeared in several collections; and the Rev. J. R. Wreford's hymn,

"Lord, while for all mankind we pray,"

published in the preceding year, has had a still larger circulation.

In 1861 Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote at the outbreak of the American War what became known as the "Army Hymn." We quote the fourth verse:

"God of all nations! Sovereign Lord!
In Thy dread name we draw the sword,
We lift the starry flag on high
That fills with light our stormy sky."

Its use, however, has not been permanent, even in America. In the same year Sir Henry W. Baker published in "Hymns, Ancient and Modern," a hymn which has probably been sung as often as any other in the present year,

"O God of love, O King of peace!"

It is exceedingly simple, and the persistence of the refrain, "Give peace, O God, give peace again," helps to make it a favourite with a certain type of minds, who prefer the recurrence of some simple thought or some simple phrase to greater variety of ideas and expression.

Another very fine hymn, with a similar refrain to each verse, but far more elaborate and perhaps somewhat turgid, is by H. F. Chorley (1842), the three last verses in the more familiar edition having been added by the late Canon Ellerton during the Franco-German War in 1870. It is in dactylic metre, thus:

"God the all-terrible! King who ordainest
Great winds Thy clarions, lightnings Thy sword!
Show forth Thy pity on high, where Thou reignest:
Give to us peace in our time, O Lord."

"God the omnipotent! Mighty Avenger!
Watching invisible, judging unheard;
Doom us not now in the hour of our danger:
Give to us peace in our time, O Lord."

A strong and clever hymn, "Jehovah-Nissi," written a few years ago by Miss Elizabeth Wordsworth, the gifted daughter of a great hymn-writer, has been revived during the present war, and is likely to do good service in other wars yet to come. The first verse runs thus:

"O Lord our Banner, God of might,
Who wast with Joshua in the fight,
And Moses on the hill,
Be with Thy servants far away,
Their shield by night, their guide by day
To succour them from ill."

The last verse is :

"Watch o'er the wounded in the field,
And where the sick and dying yield
Their souls, do Thou be nigh !
Give peace within the heart distressed,
And Peace on earth, and last and best,
Thy Peace beyond the sky."¹

The present war in South Africa has produced an overwhelming number of hymns, good, bad and indifferent. It would seem as though everyone who could string words together into verse had been tempted to make the effort of writing a war-hymn ; and, indeed, nothing is easier. To begin with, "fight" rhymes with "might," "right," "light," and a goodly selection of similar words ; and what is more obvious for the last verse than to say or pray that warfare or something else will "cease," which of course will do excellently to rhyme with "peace" as a finale ?

Amid the multitude of hymns that have appeared there is none of pre-eminent merit or of unequalled popularity, which has become, like Mr. Rudyard Kipling's war-song, a household word. The hymn that, perhaps, has been most widely used is "A Hymn for our Soldiers," by "the sister of an officer." The sale of this hymn has brought in several hundreds of pounds for the War Fund, but its diffusion is quite disproportionate to its merit. From a literary point of view it is much inferior to several other hymns comparatively little known, and its popularity is probably due to the fact that it was one of the very earliest in the field, that it was written by the sister of one of our most distinguished Generals in command in South Africa, and that the words are set to the most popular tune of modern times, Sullivan's "Onward, Christian soldiers." The first verse runs as follows :

"For our valiant soldiers,
Lord, to Thee we pray ;
Guard and keep them ever,
Be their guide and stay.
When through veldt they're marching,
Many a weary hour,
From their foes protect them
By Thy mighty power."

Another hymn which has also gained a considerable sum for the War Fund is Dean Hole's "Father, forgive":²

"Father, forgive Thy children come to claim
The pardon promised to their grief and shame ;
Forgetful, thankless, in their wayward will ;
Father, Thou knowest, and Thou lovest still."

¹ Published by Novello.

² *Ibid.*

Though superior in many respects to the hymn previously mentioned, it is not of the highest order, and such a petition as occurs in the fourth verse, "Bless the kind nurse," might be suitable at a children's service, but scarcely befits the worship of grown men and women.

The hymn which will strike most competent judges as excelling the rest in beauty of diction and originality of expression has been written by the late Rev. S. J. Stone, the well-known author of "The Church's one foundation," "Weary of earth," and others of our best hymns; and its pathos is deepened by the fact that it was written amid the suffering of a severe and fatal illness. It opens with the voice of confession :

"Lord, if too long we glorified
The splendour of our state and throne ;
Our place of power, our roll of pride,
As not Thy gift, but all our own :
Hearts lowlier now to Thee we raise,
Remorseful of that old self-praise."

Presently it turns to petition, and the third verse runs :

"We plead for those who dream of home
Far off upon the stormy seas ;
Or past the peril of the foam ;
Hear, hurtling on the Afric breeze—
Storming those hills with labouring breath—
The viewless messengers of death."¹

"The viewless messengers of death" is a particularly good periphrasis for "bullets," and marks the poet. The hymn is decidedly clever—perhaps too clever, for in a hymn to be sung by all sorts and conditions of men great plainness of speech is desirable; and an able hymn by Mr. A. C. Benson, "O Lord of Hosts, who didst upraise," will be generally rejected from the fact that to many simple folk some of it will be quite unintelligible.

In striking contrast to more elaborate compositions of the type just mentioned are Mr. A. C. Ainger's "Let God arise,"² and the Rev. W. H. Draper's "From homes of quiet peace,"² which are written with studied simplicity, and are well suited for general use. It is unlikely, however, that any of these will take a permanent place in our hymn collections, and some of the very best, e.g., the Rev. S. J. Stone's "Lord, if too long," already quoted, are so obviously written to meet the circumstances of the present war that they are unfitted without considerable alteration to do duty in future wars, where the local colour and other conditions may be altogether different.

¹ Published by Skeffington and Son.

² Published by Novello.

The doctrine, indeed, of the "survival of the fittest" does not always seem to obtain with regard to hymns, and very inferior compositions, crude in style and rhyme, have sometimes a long-continued popularity, due often to the tunes with which they are associated. The recent centenary of Cowper's death reminds us that his "There is a fountain filled with blood" has found favour with millions during more than a hundred years, and yet, if it were written for the first time to-day, the too realistic imagery of its first verse would probably exclude it from admittance into any first-class magazine. The "hymns that have helped" (to use Mr. Stead's phrase) are not always those which are intrinsically most perfect. It is therefore almost impossible, except in a few cases, to foretell with any degree of certainty how far any new hymn may become imbedded in the national literature, and it is perhaps safer not to prophesy. Possibly a hundred years hence the criterion of taste in these matters may be very different from what it now is; though we scarcely dare hope, however fervently we may desire, that with the progress of culture and enlightenment wars and war-hymns shall then be but memories of the past.

S. C. LOWRY.

ART. VII.—PERVERTS TO ROME: WHO AND WHENCE?

ONE of those astonishing pieces of self-delusion which never cease to cause unstinted amazement in other people has lately been paraded by a correspondent of the *Record*. He had seen a list of perverts to Rome from the ranks of the English Church Union, and was moved to some indignation thereat. Accordingly he wrote as follows (*Record*, June 7, 1901) over the signature, "A Member of the E.C.U.":

"You give in the *Record* this week the names of over eighty Anglican clergy who have seceded to the Church of Rome of late years. But your list is confined to clerical members of the English Church Union. This makes the list a comparatively short one. The majority of clergy who have 'gone over' to the Roman Communion have not been E.C.U. men at all. The total number of clerical converts (or perverts) is about 500, I regret to say. I have their names before me as I write. Many, no doubt, though not members of the Union, were High Churchmen; but very many were Protestants of various kinds. In fairness to us, I think, sir, this fact ought to be borne in mind."

Pressed by an inquiring correspondent to name some of