

## TE DECET LAUS.

IN the JOURNAL for January 1915 (xvi 255 ff) Mr J. Mearns published two useful indexes to the hymns in the *Anthologia Graeca Carminum Christianorum* of W. Christ and M. Paraniakas (1871). In the first of these indexes he gives a list of first lines in alphabetical order, with a reference to the page of the Anthology on which each occurs and an indication of the source from which each is drawn—usually the service-book in which it finds a place, occasionally the original author or some early document. For two of the hymns, *Αινεῖτε, παῖδες, κύριον* (*Anth.* p. 39), and *Εὐλογητὸς εἶ, κύριε ὁ τρέφων με* (*Anth.* p. 40), the only reference given is 'In the Apostolic Constitutions'. Hence it appears that neither of these hymns is in use in the Greek services. The place in the *Apostolic Constitutions* in which they occur is, of course, at the end of book vii, in chapters 48 and 49.

Those who use Funk's edition of the *Apostolic Constitutions* will see in a note to the *Εὐλογητὸς εἶ* that this formula is to be found also in St John Chrysostom's *Hom. 55 in Matth.* and in Pseudo-Athanasius *de Virginitate*; in both these places it is spoken of as a grace after meat. But all that Funk could do by way of illustrating the *Αινεῖτε παῖδες* was to refer to the *Φῶς ἱλαρόν* (in Routh *Rel. Sacr.* iii 515) and to the somewhat similar evening hymn of Gregory of Nazianzus (*Carm.* 32).

This hymn beginning *Αινεῖτε* may for present convenience be broken up into four parts—if indeed it be a single composition and not rather a mere aggregate of several short formulae.

1. Ps. cxii 1 *Αινεῖτε κτλ.*
2. *αἰνοῦμέν σε, ὑμνοῦμέν σε, εὐλογοῦμέν σε διὰ τὴν μεγάλην σου δόξαν, κύριε βασιλεῦ ὁ πατὴρ τοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ ἀμόμου ἀμνοῦ, ὃς αἶρει τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου.*
3. *σοὶ πρέπει αἶνος, σοὶ πρέπει ὕμνος, σοὶ δόξα πρέπει τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ διὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων· ἀμήν.*
4. *νῦν ἀπολύεις* (with the rest of the *Nunc dimittis*).

Of these four pieces, 1 and 2 perhaps belong together. But the *Nunc dimittis*, in 4, seems quite independent of the piece in 3, which is itself of the nature of a doxology, and has its own 'Amen'.

The point of this Note is to call attention to an interesting historical fact, connected with no. 3 (*σοὶ πρέπει*) above, which seems not to be commonly known. This little hymn, or doxology, was well known in

the neighbourhood of Rome in St Benedict's day (say, 500-550); it was prescribed by him to be said at a certain point in the Night Office; and it is actually in use there to this day.

In chapter xi of his *Rule* St Benedict directs that after the reading of the Gospel at 'Vigils' (that is, Nocturns, or what we now call 'Mattins') on Sundays, the abbot shall commence the 'hymn' *Te decet laus*. His words are:

'et subsequatur mox abbas hymnum *Te decet laus*, et data benedictione incipiant Matutinos' (i. e. 'Lauds').

In quoting only the first words of this formula, St Benedict shews us that the rest must have been well known. The full Latin text, as traditionally said in the Benedictine Office on all days when the Gospel is read at Mattins, is as follows:

'Te decet laus, te decet hymnus: tibi gloria Deo Patri et Filio cum sancto Spiritu in saecula saeculorum. Amen.'

This formula will be sought in vain in three out of the four volumes of the Breviary. It is printed in one place only, viz. in the 'Pars Hiemalis', after the Gospel at Mattins for the first Sunday of Advent—the first occasion in the ecclesiastical year on which it is said. Elsewhere it is not even referred to by a rubric. Thus its present existence may easily escape those not familiar by use with the Benedictine Office. It is now said *memoriter* by all together immediately after they have responded 'Amen' to the Gospel.

The *Te decet* is not in the Roman Office; and I do not know where it is to be found except in the Apostolic Constitutions and the Monastic Breviary. The survival in use of this little hymn—truly 'ancient and modern'—and the medium of its preservation in the West seem worth drawing attention to. The facts about it are, it is true, no new discovery, for commentators on the *Rule* have already referred to A. C. vii for the *Te decet*. But I cannot find that these facts are matter of common knowledge: Funk, for instance, gives no reference to the *Rule*, while Abbot Butler, in his edition of the *Rule* (Herder, 1912), does not cite A. C. vii among his *Fontes*; and other recent writers who could be named, in treating of the hymns in A. C. vii and similar ancient formulae, fail to connect the  $\Sigma\omicron\iota\ \pi\rho\acute{\epsilon}\pi\epsilon\iota$  with the *Te decet*.

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Since the above has been in print my attention has been called to a recent book in which the facts here indicated have already been noted: viz. *Pange Lingua*, by Alan G. McDougall (Burns and Oates: Preface dated April 20, 1916), Introduction (by Dr Adrian Fortescue) p. xv.