

professors in recognition of his long and devoted services to the Society. Dr. Robinson retired from the office of President and Father Lattey, S.J. was elected in his place for the coming year. The election was noteworthy in that it is the first time that a Catholic priest has been elected to that position. We offer him our congratulations and wish him all success. A very crowded programme filled the days of the meeting—no less than four papers a day being read. But the interest and the discussions never flagged. Finally, grateful thanks must be offered to the Warden and Students of Aberdare Hall who looked after us so well during our stay.

R.C.F.

A CALL TO WORSHIP

(PSALM 94)

by DOM ROMANUS RIOS, O.S.B.

THE new edition of the Psalter, newly translated into Latin from the original Hebrew by the Jesuit Fathers of the Biblical Institute in Rome, and declared by Pope Pius XII an official text for the recitation of the Divine Office, provides us with a welcome excuse for turning once more to that most commented of all the books of the Bible. At the request of the Rev. Editor of this Review, I propose to put together a few notes on those psalms which are most frequently used either at the Mass or at the Divine Office.

Psalm 94 is one of these. From time immemorial it has been employed to usher in the official prayer of the Church at Matins. We append here the new translation with the corresponding English version :

PSALM 94

THE SUMMONS TO DIVINE PRAISE

VENITE, EXULTEMUS DOMINO !

First Part

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| <p>Venite, exultemus Domino :
acclamemus Petrae salutis nostrae.</p> <p>Accedamus in conspectum ejus
cum laudibus, cum canticis exultemus
ei.</p> <p>Nam Deus magnus est Dominus
et Rex magnus super omnes deos ;
in manu ejus sunt profunda terrae,
et altitudines montium ipsius sunt.</p> | <p>1. O come, let us sing unto the Lord :
let us shout for joy to the Rock of
our salvation.</p> <p>2. Let us come before His presence
with songs, let us shout for joy with
psalms unto Him.</p> <p>3. For the Lord is a great God, and
a great king above all gods ;</p> <p>4. in His hands are the depths of the
earth, the heights of the mountains
are also His.</p> |
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Ipsius est mare, nam Ipse fecit illud,
et terra sicca quam formaverunt manus
ejus.

Venite, adoremus et procidamus,
et genua flectamus Domino qui fecit
nos.

Nam Ipse est Deus noster : nos autem
populus pascuae Ejus et oves manus
Ejus.

5. The sea is His, for He has made it,
and His is the dry land which His
hands have fashioned.

6. O come, let us adore, let us fall
down, let us kneel before the Lord
who made us.

7. For He is our God : and we are
the people of His pasture and the
flock of His hands.

Second Part

Utinam hodie vocem Ejus audiatis :

Oh, that today you may hear His
voice

Nolite obdurare corda vestra ut in
Meriba, ut in die Massa in deserto,
ubi tentaverunt me patres vestri,
probaverunt me, etsi viderant opera
mea.

8. Harden not your heart as in Meriba,
as on the day of Massa in the wilderness,

9. where your fathers tempted me,
they tried me, although they had
seen my works.

Quadraginta annos taeduit me
generationis illius, et dixi : Populus
errans corde sunt, et non noverunt
vias meas.

10. For forty years was I disgusted
with that generation, and said : They
are a people that err in their heart,
and they did not know my way.

Ideo juravi in ira mea : " Non
introibunt in requiem meam."

11. Therefore I swore in my wrath :
" They shall not enter into my rest."

The Syriac, the Septuagint and the Vulgate ascribe this psalm to David. Indeed, in the Epistle to the Hebrews (iv, 7) this psalm is introduced as follows : " So, he fixes another day. Today, as he calls it ; in the person of David, all those long years afterwards, he uses the words I have already quoted, If you hear his voice speaking this day, do not harden your hearts." But modern biblical scholars tend to assign this psalm to the decades immediately following the return of the Jews from exile. In fact, Psalm 94 belongs to a group of six—94-99—which have as their common theme the rapturous joy experienced by the Jews in God's service. One of these psalms, the 95th, has in the Septuagint this telling title : " When the House was built after the Captivity." The Davidic authorship, mentioned in Hebrews, need not be understood as more than a generic attribution referring to the whole psalter, not to this specific psalm. When we examine the psalm, it is obvious that it falls into two divisions : 1-7a=7b-11. The former is a joyful summons to Israel to the Worship of God ; the latter a timely warning to be loyal to God's voice. Some writers insist on making the psalm consist of two fragments. They base their opinion on the change of theme. This change, however, may be easily explained otherwise, and in fact the two sections of the psalm re-enforce each other.

The psalm opens with a grandiose invitation : *Venite, exultemus Domino*. These are simple, but stirring words. The Knights Templars used them as their battle-cry. The new Latin translation continues :

Acclamemus Petrae salutis nostrae. Let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation. This exemplifies one of the most welcome changes in the new version. Often in the Old Testament God is called Rock or Castle, to denote refuge, place of security, of safety. The Sacred Poets had before their eyes those mountain-tops of the East, crowned by a fortified castle, which the warrior hailed as his longed-for refuge. The simile occurs several times in the Psalter; for example in Psalm 17: *Diligo Te, Domine, fortitudo mea: Domine petra mea, arx mea, liberator meus, Deus meus, rupes mea, in quam confugio.*

Verse 5—*Ipsius est mare, nam Ipse fecit illud*—is one of those examples of sublimity in simplicity, in which the Bible abounds. The idea could not be expressed in simpler words; and yet, only those who have recited or sung it in mid-ocean have experienced how lasting and irresistible an impression it can produce.

The most important change of the new Latin version is to be found in verse 8, where instead of the former phrases: *in exacerbatione*, and *secundum diem tentationis*, the translators have wisely retained the original Hebrew: *ut in Meriba, in die Massa*, thus referring the readers to one of the episodes in Jewish history which no faithful Israelite could ever forget: it is in fact one of the blackest pages in the annals of the chosen race. The episode is narrated twice. First in Exodus (xvii, 1 sqq.) where we find Israel as usual murmuring in the desert for lack of water, and Moses "called the name of that place Temptation (Massa) because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and for that they tempted the Lord saying: Is the Lord amongst us or not?" (Exodus xvii, 7). The second narrative occurs in Numbers (xx, 1 sqq.). See especially verse 13: "This is the water of contradiction (Meriba), where the children of Israel strove with words against the Lord and He was sanctified in them (that is, and He was blasphemed by them)."

The concluding verses of the psalm must be read against the historical background of the terrible national apostasy of the Jewish nation in the desert when they openly rejected God who was leading them, in favour of the golden calf, before which they knelt, saying: "These are thy gods, O Israel, that have brought thee out of the land of Egypt" (Exodus xxxii, 4). One of the greatest Spanish classical writers, Fray Luis de León, who belonged by birth to a Jewish family, penned these lines: "If we read carefully that which was written by Moses, we shall come to the conclusion that in the worship of the golden calf is to be found the principal crime, for which, by God's permission, the Jews were allowed to disown and deny Christ."

We have given this psalm the title "A Call to Worship." And such it certainly is, especially the first part: a summons to praise God officially in the Temple. The Jews still use it in their Liturgy for the

¹ *Los Nombres de Cristo*, Lib. 11, par. 1.

weekly inauguration of the Sabbath. In the Christian Liturgy of the Western Church, it has for centuries past opened the daily office of Matins. From the Roman Breviary it passed on to the Book of Common Prayer. St. Benedict wishes this introductory Psalm to be said *cum antiphona*, or preferably to be sung—*aut certe decantandus* (Holy Rule, ch. ix). In another chapter (xliii) he directs that the *Venite* should be recited *omnino subtrahendo et morose*—quite slowly and leisurely. And certainly on big festivals, one of the joys afforded by the recitation of the Divine Office in choir, is to lift up one's soul in the elaborate and unforgettable strains of the *Venite exultemus Domino, acclamemus Petrae salutis nostrae!*

The second part of the psalm has also its timely reminder. It brings back to the memory of those who are about to recite the Divine Praises the fact that these in themselves mean nothing unless they be accompanied by a life of loyalty and fidelity to God. Otherwise He could repeat of us what He said of the Jews: *Populus iste labiis me honorat, cor autem eorum longe est a me.*

THE DATE OF OUR LORD'S BIRTH

by T. CORBISHLEY, S.J.

AT first sight it seems odd that the date of the Nativity of our Lord should be in any doubt, since we have grown accustomed to reckoning all other events from that as starting-point. And if only the sixth century monk, Dionysius Exiguus, to whom we owe our present system of reckoning, had been correct in his calculations, there would of course be no problem. Unfortunately he was wrong. It looks as though his calculation was based on the two passages of St. Luke (iii, 23 and iii, 1), which seem to state definitely that our Lord was thirty in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar. Since Augustus died in the year 767 A.U.C., it would seem to follow that the fifteenth year of Tiberius began in the year 782, so that if Dionysius misunderstood *incipiens* as implying that the fifteenth year of Tiberius saw the beginning of our Lord's thirtieth year, it would be natural to deduce that he was born in the course of the year 753 A.U.C.—which thus became what we call B.C. 1. (B.C. 1 and not A.D. 1, presumably because most of the year occurred before the Nativity.)

Whatever else is certain, we can state categorically that this conclusion is wrong. The account of the Nativity given us in Matthew ii, makes it clear that our Lord was born before Herod died, an event which occurred in the year 750 A.U.C. The evidence for this date is to be found in two passages of Josephus (*Ant.* xvii, 8, 1, *BJ.* i, 33, 8), which inform us that Herod died 37 years after his recognition by