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Short Commentary

HYMNAL NOTED.

147. d.

138.



A SHORT COMMENTARY
ON
THE HYMNAL NOTED.



A SHORT COMMENTARY
ON
THE HYMNAL NOTED,

From Ancient Sources.

INTENDED CHIEFLY FOR THE USE OF THE POOR.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE little collection of hymns which we have just begun to use in this church, is very different, and is made on quite a different principle, from the other collections which you may have seen. I will explain how this is.

When the reformers drew up the Prayer Book which we now use, they did not sit down, and write it out of their own heads. They took the old Prayer Book of the Church of England, which was written in Latin ; and they translated the new Prayer Book out of that ; and admirably well they did it.

But there was one part which they did not translate ; and that was the hymns. They tried more than once, but they could not succeed : and they had wisdom enough to

know that they were not successful. They only put one translation in the Prayer Book, the hymn *Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire*, in the Ordination Service. They left it as their wish, however, that others might arise in the English Church who should be able to translate the hymns which they left untranslated.

But as years went on, this their wish was neglected. Men put the psalms into verse, and sang *them* by way of hymns: forgetting that the psalms are best to be sung in a very different way, namely by chanting them.

At last people saw that hymns were wanted. But instead of looking back to the old hymns of the Church of England, they wrote new ones: and so a great number of "collections," that have no authority, came into the Church.

In the little book which we now use, the wish of the English Reformers has been carried out. The old hymns of the English Church are translated here, just as the old prayers of the English Church are translated in the Prayer Book; and they are given to

the old tunes, which was also the wish of the Reformers.

These hymns were not written by any one man, nor at any one time. They are offerings, cast into the treasury of the Church, slowly, and at different periods, during the space of a thousand years. The writers of most of them are unknown. Of those whom we do know, some are among the greatest Saints that GOD has raised up in the Church.

These very hymns, then, have consoled thousands of GOD's faithful servants in all kinds of circumstances, almost from the days of the Apostles to our own:—and if on this account only, they ought to be dear to us. But written as they were, not *to order*, not because they were wanted, but because the feelings of the writers were so warm at the moment that they *would* express themselves, written, as many of them were, by such great Saints,—they must have a depth and a fulness of meaning which cannot be expected in other hymns.

And this fulness of meaning makes them, just as it makes the collects of our Prayer

Book, sometimes difficult to be understood. For this reason the following explanation of them has been written.

The hymns themselves, being so different from those to which we are chiefly accustomed, will perhaps, at first sight, seem strange and cold. But the more they are studied, the more their value will be seen and felt. God grant that we may so use them as, in His good time, to be counted worthy of joining with their writers, and the thousands of faithful Christians whose comfort they have been, in that new song, which no man can learn, save the hundred and forty and four thousand, which are redeemed from the earth !

A Short Commentary
ON THE
H Y M N A L N O T E D.

I.

It is fit that, in ending the week, we should lift up our hearts to that Blessed TRINITY in Whom we live and move and have our being. The hymn therefore is addressed to the Three glorious Persons. 1. *Trinity of blessed light.* Not only because "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all;" but because we receive spiritual light, when we are baptized in the Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST. 2. *Of princely might.* So we read in Psalm li. 12: "Stablish me with Thy *free*, or *princely*, SPIRIT." We call on GOD not only as Almighty, and therefore able to help us; but as Princely, that is ready to bestow His blessings on us as a

liberal King on His servants. 5. *Our morning song and our evening prayer.* Besides the natural sense of these words, they also mean that in the time of prosperity, which is like a morning, when everything is bright and gay, we are to praise God; and in the time of trouble, which is like evening, when the sky grows dark, and the world gloomy, we are to cry for His help. And so it is written: "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing Psalms." (S. James v. 15.) 8. As the whole hymn is addressed to the Blessed TRINITY, there is no special doxology at the end.

II.

7. *Prevent each action.* That is, *go before* us in all we do. Just as in the Collect: "*Prevent us, O LORD, in all our doings.*" 11. *Each transgression of the night.* We shall do well to notice, all through these hymns, how the Church prays that her children may be forgiven for, and kept from, sins by night, as evil dreams, and sinful thoughts and imaginations. 13. *Cut off, we pray Thee, each*

offence. The hymn refers to circumcision: just as we pray in the Collect: "Grant us the true circumcision of the spirit: that our hearts and all our members being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, we may in all things obey Thy godly motions." 15. *That Thou mayest be praised.* Because, as the wise man teaches, "Praise is not comely in the mouth of a sinner."

III.

8. *According to the Prophet's call.* Namely the words of David, (whom S. Peter calls a prophet.) "Early in the morning will I cry unto Thee: for in Thy word is my trust." 12. *Our Home again.* No thought is oftener found in all these hymns, than the recollection that we are strangers and pilgrims in this world, and that heaven is our Home. This present life is often, by old writers, called *the way*. So in another ancient hymn:

O Blessed LORD, Whose praise we sing!
 Here in *the way* we worship Thee:
 That in the Country of our King
 Filled with Thy glory we may be.

17. *Father of unclouded light.* So S. James says that "every good gift cometh down from the FATHER of *Lights.*"

IV.

This hymn contains a short account of a Christian day. 1. *Now that the daylight fills the sky.* This refers also to CHRIST, the Sun of Righteousness, and teaches us that since "the darkness is past, and the True Light now shineth," we must "walk honestly as in the day." 5. We first ask that our tongue may be kept from evil, because S. James tells us that "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." Then, (7.) we follow David's example, by praying, "O turn away mine eyes lest they behold vanity:" and (8.) that our ears may be stopped from listening to temptation. But since all this will be of no advantage to us if our heart is defiled with sin, we go on to desire, (9.) that it may be kept from all impurity; and also, (10.) from folly, which so often leads to sin. And in order that we may be so preserved, we pray,

(11.) that we may have grace to keep under the body, and bring it into subjection, because the body is so often an inlet for sin to the soul. 16. *For victory gained* this day over temptation, and over ourselves. 20. *The Holy Paraclete.* The word PARACLETE means Comforter, and it is our LORD'S OWN word: "I will give you another PARACLETE, that He may abide with you for ever."

V.

As the HOLY GHOST came down at the Third Hour, the Church loves to pray to Him at the same hour. 4. *And dwell with us.* As S. Paul teaches: "Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the HOLY GHOST?" 7. That is, that as one thing catches fire from another: so the hearts of others may, so to speak, be set on fire with the love of God by touching ours.

VI.

1. *O God of truth.* Because GOD promised Noah, (Gen. viii. 22,) that while the world lasted, the changes of the day and of the year should continue. Therefore, the

coming of morning, noon, and night, each in their turn, is a proof of GOD'S truth: just as of His almightiness also: therefore we continue, *O LORD of might*. 5. The heat of the noon reminds us to pray against the heat and fever of all evil lusts.

VII.

1. *O GOD, Creation's secret Force.* We are reminded at the ninth hour, when day begins to decline, that GOD not only created all things, but supports them now, though we do not see the Power which keeps them up, and which is *secret*:—that He is the Preserver as well as the Creator of all mankind: and that all the changes, whether of fair weather or storm, or of morning, noon, and evening, are His bringing to pass. Hence, (5.) we go on to remember the great change which must happen to all of us; and we pray that when the day of this life is over, we may have *a glorious evening*, that is, the repose of the kingdom of heaven; as it is written,—“His rest shall be glorious.” And there is a reference to the prophecy of Ze-

chariah (xiv. 7) "But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night; but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light."

VIII.

This is properly a Sunday evening hymn. Therefore (3.) we are reminded how light was made, as on that day. *O'er the forming world.* For the "SPIRIT of GOD" had already "moved upon the face of the waters," before GOD said, "Let there be light." 9. The coming on of night reminds us of the outer darkness where is weeping and gnashing of teeth; and stirs us up to call on GOD to give us such grace as may preserve us from it. 12. *They weave new chains of woe and crime.* Thus the Collect: "Though we be tied and bound with the chain of our sins, let the pitifulness of Thy great mercy loose us."

IX.

This little hymn has been said every night in the Church for more than a thousand years. 6. *Fantasies.* That is, all vain fancies, and deceits of the Evil One.

X.

1. We call on GOD as the *Creator of the stars of night*, both because this is an evening hymn,—and also because this world is compared to night: and we are now looking forward to CHRIST'S Coming to be His *people's everlasting light*. As it is written: "The LORD GOD did lighten it, and the LAMB was the light thereof." 5. *Thou grieving that the ancient curse Should doom to death an universe*. Not that GOD can really grieve: but the hymn speaks after the manner of Scripture, which represents GOD as grieving, or angry, when He does that which we should do if we had those feelings. *The ancient curse* is the threat made to Adam, "In the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely die." And since, by Adam's fall, we all died spiritually, and became also subject to the death of the body, GOD sent His SON, as the next verse tells us, to be the *medicine* of a sick world. 9. *Thou cam'st, the Bridegroom of the Bride*. For the Church is constantly likened in Holy Scripture to the Bride, and our LORD to the Bridegroom. So S. Paul, after speaking of the

duties of husbands and wives, says: "This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning CHRIST and the Church." (Ephes. v. 32.) And so the Angel said to S. John: "Come hither; I will show thee the Bride, the LAMB'S Wife." (Rev. xxi. 9.) 10. *As drew the world to evening tide.* That is, when the world was drawing near to its end, as a day drawing towards night. So S. Paul tells us: "GOD hath in these latter days spoken unto us by His SON," (Heb. i. 2,) and again: "Now in the end of the world hath He appeared." (Heb. ix. 26.) 13. After having told why our LORD came into the world, to be *the spotless Victim*, or offering, it goes on to remind us of what was the consequence of His humiliation. Just in the same way S. Paul says: "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross; wherefore GOD also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name: that at the Name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that JESUS CHRIST is LORD,"

(Philip. ii. 8,) which words are almost quoted in the next verse. 20. *Of the foe.* That is, of the devil. For “for this purpose the SON of GOD was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

XI.

1. *Word sublime.* That is, the WORD of GOD, JESUS CHRIST, Who was on high with the FATHER, and “for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven.” 2. *Ere the days of time.* Or, in the words of the Nicene Creed, “before all worlds.” 4. *As years their downward course displayed.* In the latter times. So in the last hymn: *As drew the world to evening tide.* 7. *Who hear Thy call.* “Wherefore, as the HOLY GHOST saith, to-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” (Heb. iii. 7.) 8. *At length.* So S. Paul exhorts us: “Now it is high time to wake out of sleep.” And again, “The time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the flesh.” 11. *Shalt mete.* That is, shalt measure out the punishment due to sin. 13. *May not be enchained.* So we had

in the VIIIth hymn: *They weave new chains of woe and crime.*

· XII.

This hymn is by S. Ambrose, (a holy Archbishop, who lived about 370 years after our LORD,) and it has always been a great favourite with the Church. 2. *Testify Thy Virgin Birth.* That is, show, by being born of a Virgin, that Thou art really He of Whom the prophets spoke. *All lands:* because the command is to "Go and teach all nations:" *all times,* because the Jews looked forward, as we look backward, to our LORD'S coming. 6. *The Spirit, mystic still.* That is, the SPIRIT, the manner of Whose working is a mystery:—"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof: but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the SPIRIT." 9. *The Virgin womb that burden gained, With Virgin honour all unstained.* This is thus explained by a very learned Bishop of our Church, Bishop Pearson. "I assent unto this as a most certain

truth, that there was a certain woman, known by the name of Mary, espoused unto Joseph of Nazareth, which before and after her espousals was a pure and unspotted Virgin;—and being and continuing in the same virginity, did, by the immediate operation of the HOLY GHOST, conceive within her womb the Only Begotten SON of GOD, and, after the natural time of other women, brought Him forth as her First-born SON, continuing still a most pure and spotless Virgin.” 11. *The banners there of virtue glow.* That is, as a banner is hung out to show where the general’s tent is, so *there*, that is, in this miraculous birth, we have a manifest proof that the Captain of our Salvation, Who has all *virtues*, that is powers, in Himself, is indeed among His people. 14. *The royal hall of chastity.* That is, the Virgin’s womb. It is the *hall of chastity*, because of her purity: and it is the *royal hall*, because out of it came He That is to be the King of all nations. 15. Now S. Ambrose applies what David said of the Sun, to the true Sun of Righteousness, CHRIST. “He rejoiceth as a giant to run his course. He

goeth forth from the uttermost part of the heaven, and runneth about unto the end of it again." (Psalm xix. 5.) So CHRIST is likened to a giant, because of His Almighty power, and He is a giant of *two-fold substance*, because His Two Natures are formed together in His One Person. And it was fit that S. Ambrose should here, where he is speaking of our LORD's coming to save the world, remind us of His Two Natures, because it was by means of His having Two Natures that He saved us. It was needful that while He died as Man, He should live as GOD; while He suffered as Man, He should conquer as GOD; that He should be of the same substance with us, as touching His Manhood, while He was of the same substance as the FATHER, as touching His Godhead. 17. *From GOD the Father He proceeds: To GOD the Father back He speeds.* Still the hymn refers to the nineteenth psalm. And so our LORD said Himself: "I came forth from the FATHER, and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and go unto the FATHER." 23. *The weakness of*

our mortal state With deathless might invigorate. That is, strengthen our weakness with Thy might, which can never perish. For it was in order to give us that grace without which we cannot please GOD, that our LORD came into the world;—as it is written: “Without Me ye can do nothing.” 25. *Thy cradle here shall glitter bright.* This refers to an old belief of the Church, that when the shepherds came into the stable, the place was filled with a glorious light from the manger where our LORD lay. And so we go on to pray that we, who now see our LORD, the Light of the World, by faith, may hereafter see Him as He is, where *twilight shall never intervene*, that is, come between us: for it is written, “the LORD GOD giveth them light;” and again, “there shall be no night there.”

XIII.

3. So in the Nicene Creed: “*Begotten of His FATHER before all worlds.*” 4. *All ineffably.* In a manner, that is, which we cannot explain, and into which we must not

inquire. 5. *The Father's Light and Splendour.* "Being the *Brightness of His glory*, and the express Image of His Person." (Heb. i. 2.)

XIV.

This Hymn was written by Sedulius, a Scottish poet, who flourished about A.D. 430. 7. *Liberating flesh by flesh.* That is, by taking our flesh, and suffering in it, He set free the bodies of men from the power of sin, and also from death, because they will rise again as He rose. 9. "And it came to pass that, when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb." (S. Luke i. 41.)

XV.

2. *Protomartyr.* That is, first martyr. 7. *The Crown figured in thy name.* The word *Stephen*, in Greek, signifies a *Crown*. 14. *Of rosy dye.* Because of the blood that he shed for CHRIST'S Name.

XVI.

This is part of a Hymn of Prudentius,

who flourished about A.D. 370. 7. *Beneath the Altar.* He refers to Rev. vi. 9. "I saw under the Altar the souls of them which were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held."

XVII.

This is, in reality, only the continuation of Hymn XIV. 1. For when the wise men came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" we are told: "When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." 7. *Called on by light, towards Light they pressed.* Led on by the light of the star, they hastened to Him that is the True Light, our LORD JESUS. 11. So in the service of Baptism: "And by the Baptism of Thy well-beloved SON in the river Jordan, dost sanctify water to the mystical washing away of sin." The Epiphany is kept, not only in remembrance of our LORD'S manifestation to the wise men, but also of His Baptism, and of His first miracle; because all these also were His manifestations.

So S. John says : "This beginning of miracles did JESUS in Cana of Galilee; and *manifested* forth His glory." Therefore, in the next verse, the Hymn refers to the turning water into wine.

XVIII.

This Hymn is by S. Bernard, a most holy man, who lived about A.D. 1150. It needs no explanation. Many persons consider it the sweetest hymn ever written. It is suitable to the Epiphany, because, although our LORD did not then receive His Name, it was, so to speak, confirmed in Him, and manifested to others; and it is said on the 7th of August, because that day is fixed in our Calendar for the festival of the "Name of JESUS."

XIX.

1. The Hymn refers to Heb. v. 11. "I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I delivered thee: behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." 11. *With works of mercy and of love, We pray for pardon from above.*

According to that saying of Daniel's: "Break off thy sin by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor."

XX.

13. Here we pray that we may not only fast outwardly, with our bodies, but that we may also fast inwardly, by mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, without which all outward signs of sorrow, instead of turning away GOD's anger, only increase it.

XXI.

5. That is: that as it was giving way to the temptation of her appetite, which led Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, and so to lose Paradise, so one way of our regaining Paradise is the mortifying our appetites, as we are called to do in this holy time of Lent. 18. Lent is here likened to a sacrifice, which we offer every year to GOD; and we pray that we may offer it in such a way, that He will accept it, and make us worthy of keeping the great Easter Festival, to which we are beginning to look forward.

XXII.

This, which is one of the finest hymns of the Church, was written by Venantius Fortunatus, a French Bishop, who flourished about A.D. 590. Passion Sunday is the fifth Sunday in Lent, and the week that follows it is Passion Week; the week before Easter is not *Passion*, but *Holy Week*. 1. *The Royal Banners forward go*. As the banner is that which leads an army, that under which the soldiers fight, that for which (if need be) they are to die, so the Cross is to the Christian. And it is said to *go forward* at this time, because, on Passion Sunday the Church begins to teach us more fully of our LORD'S Passion, which was accomplished on the Cross. 2. *In mystic glow*. Because of the many mysteries in the Old Testament, which were types of the Cross; as the pole on which the brazen serpent hung; the wood, that being cast into the bitter waters of Marah, made them sweet; and the sticks which the widow of Zarephath was gathering. And this mystery now *shines forth*: that is, as it

was revealed to the Apostles, when our LORD suffered, so now the Church, at this time, sets it forth to us. 11. *God, saith he, Hath reigned and triumphed from the Tree.* In Psalm xcvi. 10, where we now have "Tell it out among the heathen that the LORD is King," a very old reading was, "Tell it out among the heathen that the LORD reigneth *from the Tree* : and to that the Hymn refers. 14. *O Tree with Royal Purple dight.* The Cross is said to be *dight*, or clothed, with Royal Purple, as having been dyed in the Blood of Him That is King of kings, and LORD of lords. 15. That is, chosen out from other trees to give support to the holy limbs of CHRIST. *Triumphal breast* : because it was there that our LORD won His victory over death and hell. 18. *On whose dear arms, so widely flung.* It has always been a favourite thought of the Church, that our LORD, when He stretched out His arms on the Cross, showed His willingness to embrace the whole world. 19. *The price of human kind to pay.* The arms of the Cross are here likened to a balance, on which our

LORD weighed out, as it were, His precious Blood for the salvation of man.

XXIII.

This hymn also was written by Venantius Fortunatus, like the last. 1. *The glorious battle With completed victory rife.* That conflict which our LORD endured on the cross, and which in the end was full of victory. 3. *The cross's trophy.* As soldiers set up a trophy in the place where they have conquered, so the Cross is, as it were, the monument raised in the place where our LORD triumphed over death and hell. 11. *This wood :* namely the Cross : *the ancient wood,* the tree of Knowledge of good and evil. 15. *The multiform* or manifold *deceiver :* The devil : who does indeed tempt us in all kind of ways ; for, as S. Paul says, we are not ignorant of his devices. 17. *And from thence would bring the medicine Whence the insult of the foe.* That is, as the devil prevailed over Eve by means of a tree, in the garden of Eden, so he should himself be conquered by means of a tree, that is, the Cross. 19. This verse is

taken from Gal. iv. 4. "When the fulness of the time was come, GOD sent forth His SON, made of a woman, made under the law."

XXIV.

This is the continuation of the last hymn. 13. The cross is called *faithful*, because it fulfilled the many promises of GOD touching the salvation of mankind. 16. *Thy peers may be*. That is, can be thy equals. 27. As the ark prepared a refuge for all those that were saved from the flood, so the only means of salvation for this ruined world is the Cross.

XXV.

This hymn was written by S. Fulbert of Chartres, who lived about the year 1025. 1. *Ye choirs of New Jerusalem*. Here we call on the angels to rejoice in heaven, as we do on earth in the victory of CHRIST, Who is their LORD as well as ours. 4. *Sober joy*. That is, joy that does not lead to revellings and other works of the flesh; but to such a gladness as is holy. 5. *Christ, unconquered Lion*. So our LORD is called in Holy Scrip-

ture: "The Lion of the tribe of Judah." And by His rising again He plainly showed that He was indeed unconquered. 15. For, till CHRIST died, heaven and earth were at enmity; but then He reconciled them again, and *linked* them in *one commonweal*, that is, joined them in one kingdom, over which He shall reign for ever and ever.

XXVI. AND XXVII.

These are, in fact, one Hymn, and it is so very plain and simple, that it scarcely needs any explanation. 22. *In this our Paschal Joy*. The Paschal, or Easter Season, here called the Paschal Joy, properly lasts till the Saturday before Trinity Sunday; and these days were considered by the Early Church a time of great holiness and joy. We therefore pray to be delivered, during that time, *from all that Death would fain effect*; that is, from all that might lead to the death of the body or the death of the soul. And it is very fit that we should do so, because we are now keeping the Feast of His Resurrection, Who has said, "O Death, I will be thy

plagues ; O Grave, I will be thy destruction.”

14. *The sun shines out with purer ray.* Because spring is coming on ; and the old writers loved to remind us of this. “All things rise again with their risen LORD,” says one. “Now,” says another, “it is spring in the world, and spring in the Church : spring to the soul, and spring to the body : spring that can be seen, and spring that cannot be seen.” 17. Because these wounds were proofs that He Who arose was really the same as He Who died ; that it was no vision nor fancy, but a true body. The Apostles, who saw the prints of the nails, and the mark of the spear, were to go into all the world, and preach of them to every creature ; these Wounds, therefore, may well be said to have *testified*, or borne witness to *the Lord's arising with public voice.*

XXVIII.

1. *The Paschal Victim*, or sacrifice, was in Jewish times the Passover Lamb, of which we read in Exod. xii. But now, says S. Paul, “CHRIST our Passover is sacrificed for us ;

therefore let us keep the Feast." And as He was sacrificed for us, so we must *bring the sacrifice of praise* to Him. 3. *Life's Monarch, He That died, now dies no more.* So S. Peter says of the Jews, "that they killed the Prince of Life:" and S. Paul, that "CHRIST being raised from the dead, dieth no more." 4. Here S. Mary Magdalene is asked what she saw *in the way*; that is, while she went to the sepulchre, and while she was returning to the Apostles. And in the 5th verse she answers: "*I saw the Slain One's earthly prison,*" when "she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre:" (S. John xx. 11.) *I saw the glory of the Risen*: when "she turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master." (S. John xx. 14.) *The witness Angels by the cave*: when she saw "two Angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the Body of JESUS had lain," who bare witness to His Resurrection. *And the garments of the grave*: when she beheld what S. Peter had seen, "the linen clothes, and the napkin that was about His Head."

XXIX.

In order to understand this hymn, we must know for whom it was written. It was the custom of the early Church that Baptism should be solemnly administered to many *catechumens*, that is, persons who had been under instruction and preparation for it, on Easter Eve. This hymn then refers, in the first place, to them: but, since we all have been baptized, we also may use it: and the Church therefore puts it into our mouths.

1. *The Lamb's high banquet we await.* These newly baptized persons were now for the first time about to receive the Holy Communion, and therefore truly *waiting* for that *high banquet*. 2. *In snow-white robes.* Because, at Baptism, a white garment was given to the persons baptized, with words like these: "Take this white vesture for a token of the innocence which, by GOD's grace, in this holy Sacrament of Baptism, is given unto thee: and for a sign whereby thou art admonished, so long as thou livest, to give thyself to innocency of living, that, after this

transitory life, thou mayest be partaker of life everlasting." 3. *And now, the Red Sea's channel past, To Christ our Prince we sing at last.* The Red Sea is made by S. Paul a type of baptism: this *channel* therefore was *passed* by those who had just been baptized. And CHRIST is now their *Prince*: whereas, up to that time, they had been the servants of Satan. 5. The old hymn writers love to speak of the Cross as an Altar. So another says:

Oh how beauteous, oh how glorious
Was this Altar! how victorious
Was the Blood that there was shed.

6. Our LORD's Blood is called *roseate* for two reasons. The first, because there is a reference to His being the True Rose. (Cantic. ii. 1.) The second, because blood, the longer it flows, the paler it becomes;—and we are thus reminded that our LORD shed, not a few drops only, but the whole of His Precious Blood for us men and for our salvation. 9. *That Paschal Eve God's arm was bared.* On that Easter Eve God bared

His arm, that is, put forth His might, in overthrowing the power of Satan by Baptism.

10. *The devastating Angel spared.* This refers to the destroying angel, who passed over the houses of the Israelites, when he saw the blood of the Paschal Lamb sprinkled upon them: as we read in Exodus xiii. 23.

12. *From Pharaoh's ruthless tyranny.* Pharaoh, like all the other cruel persecutors of the Israelites, is a type of Satan. And just as the children of Israel were set free from his dominion by passing through the Red Sea, so we, by baptism, are delivered from the bondage of Satan. So in the Prayer Book:

"and also didst safely lead the children of Israel Thy people through the Red Sea, figuring thereby Thy Holy Baptism."

15. *The true oblation.* Because all the Jewish sacrifices were only types and figures of this: they were "sacrifices," as S. Paul says, "which could never take away sin."

Whereas our LORD's offering of Himself on the Cross was that one true Sacrifice, which destroyed sin for ever.

16. *Our own unleavened bread sincere.* So S. Paul says that we are to keep the Easter

Feast "with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." As the Jews at this time were to put away all leaven out of their houses, so we are to put away all malice and guile, of which leaven is, in Holy Scripture, a type.

XXX.

9. *While in frames of sin and pain, A little longer we remain.* We are now rejoicing because "CHRIST being raised from the dead, dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over Him:" and therefore His Body is no more subject, as it once was, to pain and weariness. We beseech Him then to have mercy upon us, whose bodies are still subject to both: for "in that He Himself hath suffered, He is able also to succour." 11. *Our flesh may here in such wise sleep, That watch with CHRIST our souls may keep.* Perhaps Bishop Ken was thinking of this verse when he wrote in his evening hymn:

"The faster sleep the senses binds,
The more unfettered are our minds:
O may my soul, from matter free,
Thy loveliness unclouded see!"

XXXI.

7. *All power in Heav'n is Jesu's own, That here His Manhood had not known.* As He said Himself, after His Resurrection, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." And so, though according to His Godhead He raised Himself from the dead, and exalted Himself unto heaven, yet according to His Manhood it is written, "Whom GOD hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death:" and again, "Wherefore GOD also hath highly exalted Him." And this is what we confess in the Athanasian Creed, that He is "equal to the FATHER as touching His Godhead," but "inferior to the FATHER as touching His Manhood." 9. *In Nature's triple frame.* By the threefold frame of nature is meant heaven, earth, and hell. The hymn refers to that saying of S. Paul's: "That at the Name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." 13. *Yea, angels tremble when they see How changed is our humanity.* Before our LORD came into

the world, Angels allowed men to fall down before them. Daniel did so to the Angel that appeared to him by the river of Ulai. (Dan. viii. 17.) And another Angel himself put Daniel on his knees, while he talked with him. (Dan. x. 10.) But after our LORD had become man, Angels no longer allowed that flesh which He had taken, and in which He sitteth at the right hand of GOD, to bow down before them. When S. John worshipped the Angel the answer was, "See thou do it not." The nature of our manhood was changed; and that which it might once do, it might now do no longer. And the reason is given directly afterwards: *That flesh hath purged what flesh had stained, And God, the Flesh of God, hath reigned.* Because our LORD, by taking our flesh, had cleansed the sin of Adam, which was brought about by the lusts of the flesh; and now, not only GOD, that is our LORD in His Godhead, but the *Flesh of GOD*, that is, our LORD in His Manhood, *hath reigned.* A Man rules over Angels, and therefore we may no longer bow down to Angels. 17. As we are now to think of our LORD, not as He was

in the days of His humility, nor even as He was in the days after His Resurrection, but as He is at the Right Hand of the FATHER; we call upon Him to be our Joy now, and our Great Reward hereafter. The hymn refers to GOD's words to Abraham: "Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." (Gen. xv. 1.)

XXXII.

2. Our LORD's having been taken away from us cannot hinder our *loving* Him still, nor *pinning* for the day when we shall behold Him again. 16. The hymn refers to Psalm xvii. 16: "But as for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness: and when I wake up after Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it." 17. All through Ascensiontide we are reminded by this verse that "this same JESUS, Which is taken up from us into heaven, shall so come in like manner as we have seen Him go into heaven," to be our *great Reward* then, if He has been our *Joy and Guard* now.

XXXIII.

5. That is, the HOLY GHOST came down on the heads of the Apostles in the likeness of *tongues*, to show that they were to be eloquent in preaching the faith; and in the likeness of *fiery tongues*, to show that their hearts were to be on fire with love.

11. Acts ii. "Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine." 15. *The number told which once set free The captive at the Jubilee.* Every fiftieth year, among the Jews, was called the year of Jubilee. Then all Israelite slaves were set free; every thing which any Israelite had given in pledge or in mortgage was given back; all men came to their own; it was the great year of restoration. So Whitsunday, the *fiftieth* day after Easter (and thence called *Pentecost*,) was the day on which the HOLY GHOST came down to break the yoke of Satan, and to bring us into the "glorious liberty of the sons of God," as it is written: "Where the SPIRIT of the LORD is, there is liberty."

XXXIV.

This hymn was written by Charlemagne, the Emperor of the West, who lived about 800 years after our LORD. It has always been believed to have great worth and power in obtaining the gifts of the HOLY GHOST, and is therefore used at the coronation of kings, at the opening of councils, and, as in our own Prayer Book, at the consecration of Bishops and the ordination of Priests. 2. *And lighten with celestial fire.* Here we call on the HOLY GHOST to give us His two great blessings: the *light* of knowledge, and the *fire* of love. 4. *Thy sevenfold gifts.* The Spirit of 1, Wisdom; 2, Understanding; 3, Counsel; 4, Might; 5, Knowledge; 6, Piety; 7, Fear. 5. *Thy blessed Unction,* or anointing. So S. John: "But ye have an unction from the Holy One." Because the gifts of the HOLY GHOST are often, both in the Old and in the New Testament, set forth to us by oil. 8. The *sight*, that is, the spiritual sight, of man, was darkened at the fall; and the HOLY GHOST gives illumination, or en-

lightenment, first of all at Baptism ; and, day by day, more and more clearly to those that call upon Him. 9. *Our soiled face.* Soiled, that is, with the pollution that sin has brought upon us. 11. *Keep far our foes, give peace at home.* Here we pray that the Church may have rest from outward enemies, and also may be preserved from the rising up of heresies and false doctrine within herself.

XXXV.

2. *Like splendour, and one Deity.* This is in other words what the Athanasian Creed teaches: "Such as the FATHER is, such is the SON, and such is the HOLY GHOST." And again: "But the Godhead of the FATHER, of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST, is all one." 7. *Nature, in her triple frame.* That is, as in Hymn XXXI., things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. 13. *Light, sole and one, we Thee confess.* We call on GOD as the sole or only author of light, as S. James writes, that He is "the Father of lights:" and as

the *one* fountain of light, because "these Three are One." 14. *With triple praise we rightly bless.* That is, it is very meet and right that we should join in the threefold praise of the Angels: for "they rest not day nor night saying, Holy, holy, holy, LORD GOD of Hosts." 15. *Alpha and Omega we own.* Alpha is the first, and Omega is the last letter of the Greek Alphabet, and thus we confess GOD to be the beginning and the end of all things. So our LORD says Himself in the Revelation: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."

XXXVI.

This hymn is by S. Ambrose, of whom you heard in the notes on the XIIth. 1. Here we confess, as the Church always loves to do, that all that she has, and all that she is, comes from her LORD: that the *Apostles' glorious deeds* are the *gifts of CHRIST*. And they are the *eternal* gifts, because the kingdom which was set up by them shall endure *for ever and ever*. 5. *The Church in these*

her princes boasts. There is a reference to Psalm xlv. 16, where the Prophet, speaking to the Church, says, "Thou shalt have children, whom thou mayest make princes in all lands."

6. *The warrior hosts* are the multitude of Christians, especially of Bishops and Priests, who have followed the blessed Apostles from that time to this, in destroying the works of the devil.

11. *The love of CHRIST that knows not shame.* Or, that is perfect: because, as S. John writes: "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear."

12. *The Prince of this world overcame.* So our LORD Himself called the devil, when He said: "The Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me."

13. *In these the FATHER'S glory shone:* in their miracles, in their doctrine, in their success. *In these the will of GOD the SON:* because His will is that "all men should be saved, and should come to the knowledge of the truth." *In these exults the HOLY GHOST:* because by His grace only could they have accomplished these mighty deeds. *Through these rejoice the Heavenly host:* because "there is joy in the presence

of the Angels of GOD over one sinner that repenteth."

XXXVII. AND XXXVIII.

Are only parts of Hymns XXVI. and XXVII.

XXXIX.

7. *These victors win the noblest bay.* The crowns of conquerors are made of the bay tree: the Hymn declares, therefore, that the victories gained by the martyrs are more glorious than any victories of this world. So S. Paul says: "They," that is, those who in old time strove for the prize, "do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible." 8. This refers to what S. Paul tells us, in his catalogue of those that suffered for the sake of the faith: "being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy." 12. *They knew them short-lived all.* So again S. Paul: "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of GOD, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." 15. *For Thee all pangs they bare.* The next verse mentions some of the more common

torments over which the blessed martyrs triumphed : a learned man has written a large volume on their tortures. 22. *Like sheep their blood they poured.* So Psalm xlv. : “ For Thy sake are we killed all the day long : we are accounted as sheep appointed to be slain.”

XL.

7. *He knew their joys imbued with gall.* That is, he knew that the seeming pleasures of sin were indeed *imbued*, that is, deeply infected with sorrow as bitter as gall. As Solomon says : “ Nevertheless at last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.”

XLI.

The Festivals of Confessors. In the early Church, the word Confessor meant one who had suffered torments, or imprisonment, though not death, for the name of CHRIST. But afterwards, it came to be taken more largely, and to mean any saint, not a martyr ; as having confessed CHRIST before men.

XLII.

This Hymn was written by a German Archbishop, S. Rabanus Maurus, the most learned man of his time, who lived about 800 years after our LORD. 9. *The warrior Primate Of celestial chivalry.* S. Michael is constantly represented to us as the *primate*, or leader, of the heavenly armies. So in the Revelation: "There was war in heaven: Michael and his Angels fought against the Dragon; and the Dragon fought, and his Angels, and prevailed not." And the next line refers to this. 11. *Michael, who in princely virtue Cast Abaddon from on high.* So Revelation ix. 11: "The Angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon; but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon." Both words mean the same thing,—namely, *A Destroyer.*

XLIII.

This Hymn, like many others written on *the same subject*, is intended to raise our *thoughts from the material Church*, the dedi-

cation of which we are assembled to keep, to that Church of the First-born, which is written in heaven : that "house not made with hands, eternal." The Hymn is at least a thousand years old : at the dedication of how many thousand churches must it have been sung ! 2. *Vision dear of Peace.* *Sion* is generally understood of the Church militant, because the word means *expectation* : but *Jerusalem*, which signifies the *Vision of Peace*, is applied to the Church triumphant. 3. *Of living stones.* Each faithful soul is one of the stones which build up the heavenly temple. So another ancient hymn :

" Thy saints build up its fabric,
And the Corner Stone is CHRIST."

7. This is taken from Rev. xxi. 2. " And I John saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." And both this verse and the next are copied from the description S. John has given us of New Jerusalem. 14. *It is open evermore.* Rev. xxi. 25. " And the gates of it shall not be

shut at all by day : for there shall be no night there." And so Isa. lx. 11 : " Wherefore thy gates shall be open continually : they shall not be shut day nor night." 19. *Many a blow and biting sculpture Polish'd well those stones elect.* As stones are cut and chiselled into the right shape, before they can be built up together into a wall ; so God's servants are tried by afflictions and sorrows in this world, that they may be made meet to be built up hereafter in His spiritual temple.

XLIV.

This is only a continuation of the former Hymn. 1. As we have hitherto been taught how the walls of that Heavenly Jerusalem are built, so now we are led to look to Him Who is at once its Foundation and its Corner Stone, its Author and its Finisher, CHRIST. 3. *Who, the twofold walls surmounting, Binds them closely into one.* As a corner stone stands at the angle formed by two walls, so our LORD binds into one the *Jews and Gentiles*, once two, but united in

Him. 13. Now we call on God, that He would make the church, which we are dedicating, His own chosen dwelling-place. And these verses are taken from the prayer of king Solomon at the dedication of the temple, which we have in 1 Kings vii.

XLV.

This Hymn is a much later and inferior copy of XLIII.

XLVI.

This is generally allowed to be the finest Hymn that the Church possesses. It needs scarcely any explanation, for the writer seems to have felt that, in looking forward to the end of all things, the plainer the words he used, the more reverent: and it is this plainness of expression, joined to the greatness of the thoughts, that makes the Hymn so very fearful. 1. The first line is taken from Zephaniah i. 15. "That day, a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness." 2. See 1

once more the Cross returning. Because the Church believes that the "Sign of the Son of Man," of which our LORD speaks, will be some appearance of the Cross in the sky, such as we more than once read of in the history of the world. 21. *When the just are mercy needing.* This refers to that saying of S. Peter's: "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 1 S. Pet. iv. 18.



Short Comments

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HYMNAL NOTES