

“PRAISE” AND “PRAYS”

“Praise” and “prays,” though spelled differently, practically mean the same and sound the same. When one gives praise, he prays; and when one prays, he gives praise. It was the custom of the disciples and of Jesus to sing praises to God in psalms and otherwise, and it is related that on the last occasion when he met with all his disciples they sang Psalms 113 and 114 as we now know them. In the nineteenth chapter of Luke, verse forty, we read that Jesus said when importuned by the Pharisees to command his disciples to cease their singing and praising God, that “if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out,” indicating the great importance which Jesus laid upon the praise of God.

Further importance of praise to God is to be found in the sixteenth chapter of First Samuel, where King Saul is visited by some kind of an affliction, or an “evil spirit” and which was exorcised or healed through the ministrations of David, that “sweet singer of Israel,” who was also “cunning in playing,” and who, when the “evil spirit . . . was upon Saul,” played to him, whereupon “Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.”

Paul tells us that we should “be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

In Exodus 15, we find one of the most wonderful paeans of praise to God by Moses followed by Miriam his sister, unexcelled perhaps only by Jesus, who prayed, in part: “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” And in II Samuel, we have another paean of praise to God by David, who said: “The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence. I will call on the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.”

David also wrote some one hundred and fifty psalms, magnificent, beautiful, and with them the world has praised God for hundreds of years. Every church has its hymns of praise to God, but perhaps it is fair to say that since the time of David, there has never been a collection of hymns and praises to God so wonderfully suited to the purpose as the Christian Science Hymnal. It has taken the tunes and the words from wherever they came, irrespective of who or of what denomination, provided, of course, that permission was secured where this was necessary, and placed them where anyone may share in praising God by singing the hymns contained therein.

David was constantly singing his praises to God. His known psalms of thanksgiving and gratitude to God must have been few in comparison to those spontaneous ebullitions of song which sprang from him as he went about his daily affairs, whether tending his

sheep or as King of Israel, or when engaged in other duties between these periods. We know that he sang and danced while he was taking the ark up to the City of Jerusalem, we know that he sang and played as he alone could play in those days when he was in the presence of King Saul; and the writer does not have to stretch his imagination when he listens to this “sweet singer of Israel” as he sings out in the hills and valleys while watching over his flocks. Can you not hear him? Can you not peer into the past and hear him praising and giving thanksgiving to God as he expresses his gratitude for *His* goodness to him?

It is said of him that after his anointing to be King of Israel by Samuel, the prophet, “the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.” Can you not see him sitting near his flocks, perhaps carrying his harp with him, maybe not, but singing away at the top of his voice, happily and lustily composing the words as he goes along, the sound of his voice broken only by the occasional bleating of the sheep? Who knows but that he composed that immortal psalm as he sat out there in the fields of Palestine:

*The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul:
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil:
For thou art with me;
Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
Thou anointest my head with oil;
My cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

Perhaps as he sang this wonderful song, there was a sudden commotion in the flock, a pitiful bleating of a lamb, a sinister snarl, and as David looks up from his praise to God, a tawny mass flashes past him, and he sees that a lion has snatched a lamb from the flock. We have his own description of the occasion as he stands before Saul immediately preceding his defeat of Goliath, in answer to the King's statement: “Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.” David said: “Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion . . . and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by the beard, and smote him and slew him.” David said, moreover: “The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear [he had had a similar experience with a bear], he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.”

Paul tells us that: “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him,” and so they are; but if we follow the command of God, the

one Mind, as David did, it will inevitably be seen that the wisdom of God will prove itself to be so. David had stilled the human mind by praise to God, and when the unforeseen occurred, it found him ready. This is exactly what Jesus said we should do: "Take therefore no thought for the morrow [the future]: . . . Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Here we have David singing praise to God as he sits quietly on the hillside watching the flocks. He has no sense of impending danger; everything seems to be quite safe, and peace reigns everywhere. He could not have protected himself specifically against what was about to occur for he knew nothing whatsoever about it. But he sang praises to God! Thus he stilled the human mind, and as he did so, the divine Mind was in the ascendancy. Then came the commotion, the bleating of the lamb, the rush past David of the lion with the tender little lamb in its mouth. The human mind knew not what to do; but the human mind was gone, if not wholly, in great measure, and the divine Mind knew exactly what to do, and David turning to it automatically obeyed. It was foolishness to the human mind, but it was the wisdom of God. And it worked, as it will always work.

It is related of our Leader that she told this story to one of her trusted workers in her home at Pleasant View. She said in effect that once an old man crossing on the ocean was requested to sing a song, which he did, and in somewhat of a quavering voice sang, "Nearer My God to Thee." When he had finished another old man came forward and asked him if he were not on guard a certain night at a Confederate post, to which the man replied he was. "Well," the second old man said, "I was a sharp-shooter in the opposing army; it was moonlight; I crawled through the grass, laid down, peered through the darkness and saw you silhouetted plainly against the sky. I took deliberate aim and was about to fire, when you let your rifle fall from your shoulder and rest upon the ground and looked up into the heavens and sang that same song, 'Nearer My God to Thee.' Clearly the song rang out through the stillness of the night, and I could not fire the shot. I crawled out of the grass and retired to the shelter of our ranks." The first named man said: "I remember it well. I had been marching up and down, up and down, now and then, as posted sentinel, peering out into the darkness, eyes and ears alert for any danger, which might come along, when a sudden premonition of something wrong somewhere came to me. I peered out into the night, but all was quiet. Nevertheless, I scented danger but knew not what it might be; so I rested my gun on the butt, and turning my face to the skies, sang the song." Then the two old veterans shook hands and went out on the deck.

This is something like the same feeling David must have had as he watched over his flocks on the mountain sides of the East. Anything might happen, lions, wolves, bears might attack his flocks, marauding bands of robbers might descend upon him, but "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof;" and so he protected himself in the only possible way to protect oneself — by praise, thanksgiving and gratitude to God, his heavenly Father — and just as the Confederate soldier was shown what to do, so David was shown what to do also and with the same measure of success.

Habakkuk sings: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places."

Throughout the whole Bible, we find great stress laid upon praise to God. Praise to God is prayer. It stills the human mind. David sang: "Be still, and know that *I am*

God.” “Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.” He knew that the human mind must be stilled. Praise acts upon the so-called human mind, stilling it. Ultimately this human mind must be wholly stilled, and place given to the one Mind, the Mind “which was also in Christ Jesus,” or the Christ consciousness. When the human or mortal mind is stilled, true consciousness rushes in and takes command, steering the body into health.

There is a remarkable example of this in I Samuel, where King Saul was told to “go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.” In this Biblical history the Amalekites symbolize the human mind which is utterly to be destroyed. Saul, however retains of the Amalekites the King and the best of the cattle and sheep, the latter to be sacrificed to God. The result was that he lost his kingdom, while Samuel who discovered just what he had done, completed the utter destruction which Saul had failed to do. Everyone will lose his kingdom who does not utterly have done with the human or mortal mind.

This human mind must be destroyed *in toto*. When the army marches off to war, the band plays martial airs: “The Stars and Stripes Forever,” “The Washington Post,” “Tipperary,” “On the Way to Dublin Bay,” or other light, stirring music. It never plays, “Nearer, my God, to Thee,” “Home, Sweet Home,” “The Girl I Left Behind Me,” or any sort of air which would tend to cause the soldiers marching off to battle to think of home, of mothers, wives, children and other things they love, for this would break down the morale; but those martial, stirring tunes are played, and this lifts the human mind out of those tender thoughts, and into thoughts of fame, honor, glory and victory. Of course, this is just one phase of the human mind overcoming another human mind, the good in human consciousness overcoming the evil in human consciousness, the tender and loving overridden by the animal, warlike and brutal. But all this is the human mind only at best.

Praise to God, however, such as we have presented to us in the Christian Science Hymnal, in the Psalms, such as Paul referred to when he said, “in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,” or other spontaneous songs of praise to God, do something more than the foregoing, for these do to the human mind just what Samuel required should be done to the Amalekites: bring about utter destruction to it; for this human mind which is “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” must eventually be cut down root and branch.

In Revelation, at the time Babylon falls, and before and at the time when the Kingdom of God is revealed, we find the “four and twenty elders” worshipping God and singing, “Amen; Alleluia” to the “voice” of praise to God “of much people in heaven,” who sing, “Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:” and then “a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great;” and then “the voice of a great multitude, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth,” and so it goes throughout the whole Bible. Not only goes it through that book, but wherever any denomination has a book of prayer, such as has the Church of England in its “Book of Common Prayer,” there is to be found constant prayer and praise to God. This is just where the importance of the Christian Science Hymnal is seen. It enables us to sing praises to God; it invites us to sing praises to God. The beauty of the hymns, the tunes, the very book itself, presents to us a ceaseless opportunity to praise God. The writer sits down each morning with his new

hymn book and, at the risk sometimes of disturbing the neighbors, sings those hymns in praise to God. It stills the human mind, and in some measure, rends the veil which hides the Kingdom of God.

It is related that when at the time of the crucifixion Jesus rent the veil, that the saints arose out of their graves and walked about in the city and were seen of men; and it is a fact, that when we individually rend the veil by praise to God, thus stilling the human mind, the saints, or spiritual ideas, will arise from their graves in our consciousness wherein they have been buried under the debris of the human mind and its thinking, and will walk in the city, or our consciousness, and will be seen of others — and this is true healing.

That praise is prayer, the highest form of worship, cannot be doubted for an instant if we believe the message of the inspired Revelator to this age, who said, in *Miscellaneous Writings*: “How shall mankind worship the most adorable, but most unadored — and where shall begin that praise that shall never end? Beneath, above, beyond, methinks I hear the soft, sweet sigh of angels answering, ‘So live, that your lives attest your sincerity and resound His praise.’”