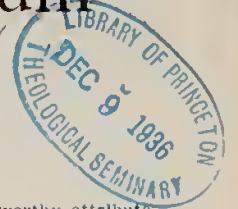


3521

# The Structure of the Te Deum Considered Devotionally

By Admiral A. T. Mahan



THE proposition advocated some months ago in a paper contributed to THE CHURCHMAN, and read afterwards to a body of clergy apparently sympathetic, that an officiating clergyman should have the liberty to give out a hymn in place of the *Te Deum*, led me to study the latter with a view to reaching such intelligent appreciation of its structure as might enable worship to be more effectively rendered with the understanding, as St. Paul recommends. I have no reason to suppose the results to be particularly original; but, not having met them in my own reading, they may be useful to others.

A late publication\* states that recent research has shown the author of the *Te Deum* to be Niceta, the missionary bishop of Remesiana, in Dacia, at the end of the fourth century. The same work says that the verse, "Make them to be numbered with Thy Saints," etc., was the end in Niceta's own hymn; those which follow being originally suffrages, in the form of versicle and response appended to it. Accepting these as assured facts, we have a composite production, the most characteristic features of which are the work of one man, however he may have utilized other contemporary phrases of worship. The evolution of his thought, manifested in the final form as we now have it, is unknown; but there appears in it so much of purpose, of consecutivity, of ordered arrangement, that it might well be placed in the category of inspired writings; well understood, of course, that there are in inspiration differences of kind, as well as of degree.

We may say that Shakespeare was inspired, without reckoning that his inspiration was of the same order, or for the same purpose, as the Scriptures. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." It may be believed that the daily life of every faithful Christian receives the inspiration of governance from God; how much more, then, might it be expected that the author of the *Te Deum* builded far better than he himself realized, being by God guided to the accomplishment of one of the most complete, as well as most majestic, of hymns truly Catholic. Therefore, it is not intended here to ascribe to the author of the *Te Deum* a reasoned development of sequence, an antecedent method of construction, such as Poe affirmed for his "Raven." Rather, the purpose is to examine the structure, and to see if, whether with or without his personal intention, which only God knoweth, such purposeful construction is to be found in the hymn as it now stands, and what that construction is. It endeavors to be a reverent inquiry into the nature and character of one of God's own compositions, which every beautiful human creative work must be assumed to be.

Here, probably, is the best place to insert the analysis of the hymn by the authority already cited:

The hymn falls into two parts, with an appendix. The first part is twofold,

comprising (a) a section, analogous to the Preface and Sanctus in the Liturgy, setting forth the praise of God the Father, and (b) a section which expresses the Church's chorus of homage to the Blessed Trinity. The second part commemorates, like the Liturgy, the work of redemption through Christ, and bases thereon a prayer for help, while the appendix contains the versicles.

My own interpretation is independent of this, and views the hymn as a unity.

Let it be observed, first, that the *Te Deum* divides into three principal portions, individually distinct in idea, but which pass one into the other by perfectly natural, almost inevitable, transitions of thought. The first section is characterized by the pronoun "Thee," direct praise being addressed to God. The second is similarly distinguished by the pronoun "Thou," a form of indirect praise. The third consists of prayer, growing by a perfectly natural turn of thought out of the words, "We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge."

The first two sections thus illustrate, though in inverse order, the Psalmist's conception of the twofold aspect of Praise: "Who shall express the noble acts of the Lord, or show forth all His praise?" "Praise Him in His noble acts; praise Him according to His excellent greatness."

Thus, under our present procedure, in which the Church, and not the individual clergyman, guides our worship, we have not many congregations singing their diverse hymns, but the one "Holy Church throughout the world" joining. And not that alone, for the opening "We" should not be understood as a vaguely sweeping expression, but as comprising definitively, yet exhaustively, the following four heads of those who join in this act of praise, viz.: the Earth (and all that therein is), Angels, Men, Living and Departed—the Church. Nor is this order without significance; it is continually from lower to higher. The Angels are greater than the Earth; Man—human nature—greater than the Angels, since the Son of God dignified it by taking flesh; while the Church is greatest of all, the assembly of the faithful more than any one man or any separate body of men—greater in the whole than any or all of the three representative companies: Apostles, Prophets, Martyrs. It embraces all things, things in heaven, as well as things on earth, in one great communion.

We praise Thee, O God!

We acknowledge Thee to be the Lord  
All the Earth doth worship Thee;  
All Angels cry aloud to Thee;

Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry to Thee, Holy! Holy! Holy!

The glorious company of the Apostles praise Thee;

The goodly fellowship of the Prophets praise Thee;

The noble (white-robed) army of Martyrs praise Thee;

The Holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge Thee;

and upon this follows the consummate act of Praise, the simple enunciation of God's Being, that He is what He is,

which is the supremely worthy attribute of His excellent Praise—the Three in One.

The Father of an infinite majesty;

Thine adorable, true and only Son;

Also the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.

The passage already cited, analyzing the hymn briefly, says that the opening words are addressed to God the Father; but it may be observed that the recurrent "Thee" is continuous throughout, and in the end is explicitly expanded to the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. There appears no good reason, but rather a violence of interpretation, in confining it in one place to the Father alone. There is doubtless a certain originative priority of order in the Person of the Father; much as Fatherhood is prior to Redemption, the peculiar office of the Son, and Redemption again to Sanctification, the especial function of the Holy Ghost. This causes the address, in prayer or praise, to be made, as a general rule, to the Father, as being, as it were, the Representative One of the Three; but the *Gloria Patri* evinces, as does also the baptismal formula, that the word God embraces all the Three as co-eternal and co-equal.

The hymn now passes on to the mighty acts of God. Of all those "noble acts," the chief is the Incarnation of the Son of God; He, in full and loving oneness of will with the Father and the Holy Ghost, humbling Himself by taking Manhood into His Godhead. In this, not only did He Himself enable Himself to suffer, but, it seems to me, the Father Himself, the whole Blessed Trinity, humbled itself to know loss. For what less do the words imply, "God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son!" Surely, this means deprivation.

Before passing on to the "Thou" section, let it be noted by those to whom the Athanasian Creed is familiar, that it has to the *Te Deum* a similarity of structure so close as to approach identity. The Trinity and the Incarnation, in the same order, are the framework common to each; each having its own specific applications. The two are also hymns; the distinguishing peculiarity being that one is a confession of faith, the other an ascription of praise.

The noble acts of the Lord, in the *Te Deum*, follow immediately upon the culminating expression of His greatness:

Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ.

Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.

Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver Man.

Thou didst humble Thyself to be born of a Virgin.

Thou hast overcome the sharpness of death.

Thou hast opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.

Thou sittest at the right hand of God.

Thou shalt come to be our Judge.

Of these, the first expresses the glory of the Manhood; the second, that of the Godhead, united in the one Divine Personality; in a word, the Incarnation. The remainder are acts, in the simple sense of the word.

That He will come to judge naturally prompts the succession of petitions

\* A New Version of the Book of Common Prayer, by Francis Proctor. Revised by W. A. Frere. 1908.

which follow and close the hymn. Upon these, I have little to say, for their scope and succession are fairly obvious. It will be noted, however, that the thought of the future Judge arouses also at once that of the present Saviour. "Help Thy people whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy Blood. Save Thy people. Make them to be numbered with Thy Saints." One thing also noteworthy is the momentary relapse, if I may so say, to praise:

"Day by day we magnify Thee;

And we worship Thy Name, ever, world without end."

If I were an equipped orator, of proper spirit, I should see here an interpolation in this seemingly incongruous, so to say, sporadic, interruption in the course of successive prayer; but I think, rather, to recognize one of those sudden turns of thought, those sudden incomings into the mind, not strictly related to the immediate antecedent, which myself I prefer to ascribe to spiritual agency; more generally God, sometimes of evil. As it is, if these verses be applied to conduct, rather than to verbal praise—"that we may show forth Thy Praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives"—they afford a transition from the general cry for help and safety to the particular prayer for the current day: "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us *this day* without sin." The worshippers, after the general petition, "Govern us and lift us up for ever," allege, so to say, their continued magnifying of God in their lives day by day, and so pass on to the prayer for the day then current—"Keep us *this day* without sin." Thus viewed, the momentary break into praise is no interruption, but displays a beautiful congruity, which yet seems almost beyond the compass of man.

Finally, the last verse of all demands peculiar attention: "O Lord! in Thee have I trusted; let me never be confounded." Unless I am mistaken, this is generally regarded as a concession to individual sense of want; the cry of the single worshipper. This strikes me as very inadequate, not to say inappropriate, in common worship. I prefer to see in it the assertion of the unity of the many members—the "We"—in the one Body, the Church, which is the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. Here the Church, the great "I," the Bride of Christ, gathers itself together in its single personality and utters this appeal, not to be confounded:

"Mid toll and tribulation,

And tumult of her war."

How fitted to this time the pathetic appeal, "Let me not be put to confusion." What strenuous Christian efforts on all sides! What high hopes of unity! What obstacles of honest, but clashing, convolutions, tending to rend asunder the host—the Body—putting it thus to confusion before the enemy; for, in the military sense—and the Church here is militant—the driving apart of the several corps is the confusion preceding imminent defeat. But we know in Whom we have believed, and are persuaded that He is able to keep that which the Church in this verse commits to His charge. In Thee have I trusted, let me not be confounded.

In conclusion, as I was drawn to this writing by the proposition to supersede the *Te Deum* at the will of any officiating clergyman, I renew here my strong appeal—protest, if I may so say—against the general proposition for the disenfranchisement of the laity, and dethronement of the Church herself, under the guise of extending liberty, in putting the regulated services at the discretion

of the individual clergyman. This is not liberty, but confusion; the abandonment of ordered liberty, and of the teaching office of the Church regarded as a whole—as a catholic body. It approaches us to one of the most defective features of the bodies who are simply Protestant, and is a step to the utter disorganization—confusion—of our system of worship, the great merit of which—as distinguished from its charm—is that it not only enables a fully catholic worship, co-extensive with the world, but that it is the enactment of the whole Church, bishops, clergy and laity, acting together in the legislative unity of the one Body.

Indications abound as to whither this is tending. In a church in New York—not the one I habitually attend—a few weeks ago I witnessed the following on a Sunday morning: The Psalter for the day was not read, nor yet a Selection; but one psalm, arbitrarily chosen. In the first lesson for the day, the destruction of Sennacherib's army, the chapter was read down to the destruction (verses 35-37), which was omitted. In the second lesson, St. John viii., the account of the woman taken in adultery was omitted. All know the doubts resting upon the passage; but, as the author of "*Ecce Homo*" said, it is eminently congruous with the character and—it may be added—with the astuteness of our Lord, and the Church orders the whole chapter read. If correctly quoted, another clergyman reads of the Fourth Commandment only the words, "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath Day"; and of the Tenth, only, "Thou

shalt not covet." If the Church in Convention so order, I have no objection; but I do object to "do as you please." In a diocesan paper I have found the proposition, by a clergyman, that the choice of lessons be left at certain seasons to the minister. At this rate, we shall soon find ourselves Protestants included in separateness of action, with little redeeming catholicity of worship. I have heard the prayer for the sick cut short with the petition for recovery; the "or else" and all that follows left out. Yet any Christian that has known sickness and its temptations would wish that, whether he recover or die, he "may so take the visitation" as to grow in spiritual character, to be advanced toward perfection through his sufferings, as the Son of God Himself was. Even under present restrictions, the tendency toward license is obvious. In the very use of the Selections, I have been able to detect nothing but the arbitrary preference of the clergyman, with possibly at times so much concession to the congregation as to shorten by five minutes the time, to get away for a sea bath before dinner.

It may be added that special services, as distinguished from regulated, are aside from this criticism. As congregational solely, they correspond to the private prayers of the individual, and under the general control of the Bishop, himself controlled by the consensus of the Church, they do not infringe upon the all-important catholic worship, the one voice, as well as the one heart, "the agreement," to use Christ's own words, of the Church throughout the whole world.

## Far-Eastern Snapshots

### III. Glimpses of the Sunrise Kingdom

By the Rev. A. R. Gray

THE fact of the matter is we can't make up our minds whether Japan is or is not as queer and Oriental as we had expected. One moment you say, "Oh this is nothing but squalid Occidentalism," and the next, "It is gorgeously Oriental."

We had a most orthodox entrance to the land. The presbyter from Mississippi and I were working in the stateroom when the dean suddenly burst in with the announcement that Fuji was in sight. Of course we rushed out and said all of the conventional things we

should say on seeing the holy mountain for the first time, but it occurred to us that it did not look quite right. It had two humps, and everybody knows that Fuji is like an ice-cream cone from whatever side one sees it. Our scepticism soon grew to disbelief and we ceased our eulogisms and went to the starboard side of the vessel to enjoy the rocky coast which stretched away to the north of us.

About an hour later, as we were going serenely up the Bay of Tokyo, we saw the real Fuji. Peerless she rose,



Junk entering Naga-aki Harbor. It was probably in such a boat that St. Francis went to Japan 350 years ago.

## Letters to the Editor

### The Church and Christian Science

To the Editor of THE CHURCHMAN:

In a little article in my parish paper accounting for the growth of Eddyism, I said one reason was that its followers had the enthusiasm of converts to a new religion. Their effort to spread their belief knows no bounds. I am asking if Churchmen will not show an equal zeal in a special instance. It is this. Some months ago there appeared in *The North American Review* an article on "Christian Science and Protestantism," professing to have been written by a clergyman of the Church. I think it was really only an alleged clergyman. At any rate, the Eddyites had this article published in pamphlet form with an enthusiastic endorsement in the form of an editorial by their literary bureau. And it was sent broadcast over the land. Many laymen in my own congregation said they had received it.

In the March number of *The North American Review* the Rev. Dr. McKim has written a most admirable reply to this article. He shows beyond all power of successful contradiction that you cannot hold the Christian faith, and at the same time accept the teachings of Mrs. Eddy. Now this article should be put in pamphlet form and circulated just as widely as the one to which it is an answer. I am not so much concerned in preserving Protestantism, but I am deeply interested in saving Christian people of whatever name, and especially the members of our own Church, from being infected by this deadly heresy. Such a publication would be of greater value than a book on Eddyism. It would be more easily read, and more easily digested.

Are there not enough Churchmen who would be willing to pay for the publication and wide circulation of this pamphlet? I would like to start a movement by subscribing \$10 toward such an end. Dr. McKim could easily form a committee which might take charge of it. Let a certain number of copies, say ten or twelve, be sent to the rector of every parish in the land, and let the rector place these copies in the hands of people whom he thinks would need them, those who are becoming interested in, or tainted by, Eddyism. Let the Church show she is just as much in earnest in holding her members to the Christian faith as the Eddyites are in trying to get them out of it. Here is a very present, practical way in which we can show the value we place upon our religion.

Let THE CHURCHMAN and other Church papers, if they will, receive subscriptions from those who are willing to help. I think it would probably take not less than \$300, and it would be well worth while.

CHARLES EWELL CRAIK.

Louisville, Kentucky.

THE CHURCHMAN would gladly receive contributions for this cause and will forward the same in accordance with any plan agreed upon by Dean Craik and Dr. McKim.—EDITOR.

### The Structure of the Te Denm

To the Editor of THE CHURCHMAN:

Admiral Mahan's interesting paper on the *Te Deum* in your issue of April 11 recalls to me a statement which may be of interest and possibly lead to my get-

ting information which I have vainly sought for many years.

In 1868, I was living at Bury St. Edmunds, in England, and during the winter I attended a course of lectures by the Rev. Canon Richardson, vicar of St. Mary's church there. In the course of these lectures, he stated that on the roof of the chancel of St. Mary's the *Te Deum* was painted, but that the three verses mentioning the Trinity, beginning "The Father, of an infinite Majesty," were omitted. He also told us that in the earliest versions of the *Te Deum* these verses did not occur, but that they were added, I think he said, about the ninth century, and not universally received for some time. The chancel of St. Mary's was built in the thirteenth century, and in 1868 the original roof remained, unaltered. I can vouch for the fact that the *Te Deum* was painted, in a series of scrolls, on the roof at that time, and that it did not contain these verses.

But I have never been able, though I have often tried, to verify his statement as to the origin and addition of them to the *Te Deum*. The internal evidence seems to support it. If they are omitted, the *Te Deum* becomes solely a magnificent hymn of Praise to Christ as God, with the fullest recognition of His Di-

vine Headship, and it remains a complete whole. It has always seemed to me that these verses appeared to be an interpolation. I should be very glad if anyone can give light on the subject.

I was in St. Mary's church last summer, but the whole church has undergone renovation since 1868, and the chancel roof has suffered with the rest.

ERNEST C. SAUNDERS.

Summit, New Jersey.

### The Real Presence

To the Editor of THE CHURCHMAN:

A correspondent in your current issue refers to "the emphasis now laid upon a manifest physical change in the elements used in Holy Communion." She claims that this teaching is distinctly that of the Latin Church and at variance with the expressed doctrine of the Prayer Book.

I take it she has not chosen her words with due regard to accuracy, for the "emphasis" to which she refers is not only against the teaching of the Book of Common Prayer, but equally against the teaching of the Roman Church.

As a matter of fact the teaching of the real objective presence of our Lord is es-

(Continued on page 548.)

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