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ORIGINAL.

THE EXCELLENCE OF THE PSALMS.\*

BY PROF. D. B. WILLSON.

*Gentlemen of the Theological Class :*

My subject this evening is The Excellence of the Psalms.

May we say of them as John Arnd, the first of the Pietists, said : "What the heart is in man, that the Psalter is in the Bible." It is part of the word of God, part of that Scripture which is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. It is a wonderful mosaic, whose pieces are of unequal age, the whole of matchless beauty. Of it, Delitzsch says : "This book has no equal in the expanse of time which it reflects, beginning with the wanderings in the wilderness, 1450 years before Christ, and reaching down to the building of the second temple, 800 years later." Bishop Wordsworth says of the fourth book of the Psalter (Psalms 90-106) : "This book has a very comprehensive character. It goes back to Moses, and it goes forward to the captivity and to the return from it. It reaches from Moses to Malachi." Perowne, another commentator on the Psalms, has written of them : "The history of the Psalms is the history of the church, and the history of every heart in which has burned the love of God. It is history not fully revealed in this world, but one which is written in heaven." † To the same purpose Tholuck has written : "What a record that would be, if one could write down all the spiritual experiences, the disclosures of the heart, the comforts and conflicts, which men in the course of ages have connected with the words of the Psalms ! What a history if we could discover the place this book has occupied in the inner life of the heroes of the kingdom of God !" ‡ Perowne, already quoted, gives

\* Opening Lecture of the Theological Seminary, Allegheny, Pa., Sept. 17, 1895.

† The Book of Psalms, Vol. 1, Chap. 2.

‡ Commentary on the Book of Psalms. Introduction, Sec. 1.

ing, etc. (p. 91), says of it: "Times without number this Psalm has been sung, as furnishing the fittest expression of the thoughts and feelings of God's people in view of deliverances wrought for them." He adds what no Scotchman can forget: "When the Covenanters at Drumclog closed their ranks to meet the onset of Claverhouse and his dragoons, they sang the opening verses to the tune of Martyrs."

Without further detail of history, I close this part of this address with the words of W. E. Gladstone, in his *Studies on Homer and the Homeric Age*, (II., 526): "But most of all does the Book of Psalms refuse the challenge of philosophical or poetical composition. In that book for well nigh 3,000 years the piety of saints has found its most refined and choicest food—to such a degree, indeed, that the rank and quality of the religious frame may, in general, be tested at least negatively by the height of its relish for them. There is the whole music of the human heart, when touched by the hand of the Maker, in all its tones that whisper or that swell, for every hope and fear, for every joy and pang, for every form of strength and languor, of disquietude and rest. There are developed all the innermost relations of the human soul to God, built upon the platform of a covenant of love and sonship that had its foundation in the Messiah, while in this particular and privileged book it was permitted to anticipate his coming."

Thus dear has been the Psalter through the ages, to the people of God. Its thoughts have filled their hearts, and its words their mouths in praise to God.

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## COVENANTERISM IN BALTIMORE.

BY REV. W. M. GLASGOW.

Maryland was chartered, and its limits described as a province by Sir George Calvert, the first Lord Baltimore, in 1632. The town of Baltimore was laid out in 1729, being incorporated as a city in 1796. It then contained twenty-two thousand inhabitants; it now reaches nearly half a million.

The city of Baltimore is situated on the north side of the Patapsco river at that portion where it forms a deep navigable arm of the Chesapeake Bay, so that the largest ocean vessels wharf in the very heart of the city. It has a peculiar yet happy topography. It extends back from the harbor over a succession of gently sloping hills, whose substratum of sandy marl prevents mephitic vapors, and from these outer hills a magnificent view can be obtained of the city, harbor and bay. The commercial advantages of Baltimore have always been appreciated. Its reputation as a safe business city is well earned when it has not had a bank failure for half a century. World-wide its name is regarded as synonymous with hospitality. It is distinguished as a city of homes, there being no tenement houses. The humblest artisan, as well as the wealthiest gentleman, gathers his

family about him in his own dwelling with every convenience, and there maintains that independence and individuality which has so largely conduced to the moral and spiritual welfare of this great city. In the happy combination of pleasantness of situation, salubrity of climate, home-like comforts, business advantages, cleanliness of streets, beauty of parks, rapidity of transportation, wealth of citizens, generous hospitality, educational opportunities and religious privileges, Baltimore cannot be excelled. It has taken the lead in many things. It was the first city in the country lit with gas; the first to inaugurate a railroad; the first to build a steam passenger locomotive; the first to possess an electric telegraph; the first to start an electric railroad; the first to commemorate George Washington by erecting a monument; the first to establish a female high school; the first to introduce manual training in the public schools; the first to erect an iron building; the first in the world to found a dental college; and upon whose streets the first blood was shed in the late rebellion. Being but forty minutes' ride from the capitol of the United States, near the seaside and mountain resorts, sight seers and rest seekers never fail to visit Baltimore.

Presbyterianism was an early element entering into the religious life of the city. The first congregation was organized in 1763; the Seceder being the second congregation organized in 1798. Almost contemporaneously with the latter the peculiar tenets of the Scotch Covenanters were here declared. For obvious reasons, however, they never became popular. Baltimore being a southern city, and at one time a notable slave mart, Covenanters so abhorred the iniquitous system of human slavery that they largely avoided its presence. The fact, also, that the city lies south of the channel of immigration from the mother country, prevented it from receiving its share of accessions from abroad. These causes have militated against a healthy and strong growth of the Covenanter Church in the past, and yet there is no more desirable location for a church, where material and spiritual advantages may now be enjoyed, than in the "monumental city."

While the minute history of Covenanterism in this region is involved in some obscurity, yet the extant data are interesting. Maryland bears the honor of entertaining the first Covenanter minister coming to America, and her hills early resounded with the declarations that "there can be a church without a bishop and a government without a king." Rev. John Cuthbertson, the first Covenanter minister who came to this country, preached his first sermon to the "Maryland society," August 9, 1751, four days after landing at New Castle, Del. His text was Jonah 2:8, "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy." The society was situated in Harford county, between Deer creek and the Susquehanna river, the "tent" being on the farm of Joseph Ross. Among the early members here were Joseph and Hugh Ross, James Dunlap, Albert Fullerton, John Gebby and Martin Mehaffay. There was another society near Brick Meeting House, in Cecil county, but the names of the members are

unknown. Mr. Cuthbertson frequently speaks of "Baltimore" in his diary, but it is not certainly known that he had a society then (1751) in Baltimore-town of two hundred inhabitants.

As early as 1790 it is known that a few families had found abode in this city, and a society was organized shortly afterwards. Among the first Covenanters in Baltimore was James Fletcher, from Ireland, who was the chief instrument in the hands of God for planting the church here. He was a man of sterling integrity and true devotion to reformation principles. Mr. Fletcher was a scowman by occupation, and, in 1795, lived on Bridge street, beyond Winon, Oldtown. (City Directory, 1796.) During this year he invited Rev. James McKinney to come and preach in his house, and baptize his children. In 1797 and 1798, on account of the Irish insurrection, many Covenanters fled to America, and some of them settled in Baltimore. About this time the families of James McCauseland, Robert Carothers and John McLean, from Scotland; and Mrs. James Black, John Anderson, John Mortimer and Samuel Moody, from Ireland, were added to the society. Rev. William Gibson also preached here as early as 1798. After their licensure in June, 1799, Alex. McLeod, S. B. Wylie and John Black frequently preached here. On account of the ravages of the yellow fever in 1800, Mr. Fletcher removed to 69 Albemarle street, where the preaching services were usually conducted, and where he lived until his death in 1820. After coming to this country, Mr. Fletcher married as his second wife, Miss Mary Campbell, of Carlisle, Pa., who was an aunt of the Cooper family of the United Presbyterian Church. (The late Dr. Joseph T. Cooper, of the Allegheny United Presbyterian Seminary, was of this family, and was born and reared in Baltimore.) An anecdote is told of Mr. Fletcher. Being a very industrious man, he was naturally vivacious in his movements. In the early days of the society, Rev. S. B. Wylie came to Baltimore to preach, and had some difficulty in finding the house of Mr. Fletcher, where he was to stop. Coming to the supposed door, and his raps being responded to by a gentleman, Mr. Wylie asked if it was the house of Mr. Fletcher. The occupant quickly retorted, "Yes; do you want to hire a scow?" The young divine replied in the negative, whereupon Mr. Fletcher was off with a dart. After Mr. Wylie had gone from the door, Mrs. Fletcher suspecting who it was, sent after him down the street. Mr. Wylie returned, found hospitable entertainment in the home, and preached eloquently on the Sabbath. The two Covenanters had many a laugh over the incident. The late Rev. John Crozier married a daughter of Mr. Fletcher.

While the society was gradually augmenting, it was not to be expected that an occasional supply of preaching would contribute much to the building up of a congregation. And, while the growth was comparatively slow, yet the society kept up its meetings with wonderful regularity. In 1801, the Reformed Presbytery appointed Rev. S. B. Wylie as stated supply of the united societies of Philadelphia

and Baltimore. The Baltimore people then secured the use of the Associate Reformed church, at the northeast corner of Pitt (now East Fayette) and Aisquith streets, as a permanent place of holding their services. In October, 1802, a call was jointly made out in these societies for Mr. Wylie, the votes from Baltimore being forwarded to Philadelphia. Rev. John Black moderated in the call. Mr. Wylie accepted it, on condition that he should be allowed to spend a year in Europe; that his pastoral relation should begin on his return; and that at the end of two years he should be at liberty to select one or other or neither of the congregations without further action of presbytery. This arrangement being agreed to, the society was supplied during his absence in Europe. Upon his return, Mr. Wylie was duly installed pastor of the united societies of Philadelphia and Baltimore, November 20, 1803, Rev. John Black conducting the services. While the society in Baltimore was not large, and they owned no house of worship, yet desirous of maintaining the covenanted cause in their adopted city, and sustaining their pastor, they performed all their religious duties with promptness and faithfulness.

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## EDITORIAL.

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### OUR DECREASE.

The decrease in our congregations reported this year is four; in membership one hundred and eleven. Seventy-one of the one hundred and fifteen congregations report a net decrease. New Brunswick and Nova Scotia Presbytery has one pastor and one unsettled minister; Vermont, two pastors; and Rochester three pastors and one unsettled minister. The decrease last year was in congregations three, and in members eighty-seven. The prospects for a better showing next year are not encouraging. One station which reports fifteen has sold its church building and disbanded; another, numbering forty-six, has determined on a similar course, intending to turn over to the church the proceeds realized from the sale of the property; one of our weak congregations has been seriously considering the propriety of dissolving its connection with us, deeming it useless to continue longer what seems a hopeless struggle for existence.

The most discouraging feature in this whole matter is the indifference with which such facts, published annually to the church in the Minutes, are regarded. It is very easy to excite a most earnest discussion with reference to some petty matter of comparatively little importance, but about which there is a difference of opinion. If a congregation attempts to leave the body and take with it the church property a great outcry is raised, thousands of dollars are advanced, and every effort is made to prevent the attempt being successful. But when our attention is directed to the fact that we are not holding our own numerically but decreasing, it scarcely occasions comment, and