

# PLAIN REASONS,

*Why neither Dr. Watts' Imitations of the Psalms, nor his other Poems, nor any other human composition, ought to be used in the Praises of the GREAT GOD our SAVIOUR—*

BUT, THAT

*A METRE VERSION of the BOOK of PSALMS, examined, with wise and critical care, by pious and learned divines, and found by them to be as near the Hebrew Metre Psalms, as the idiom of the English language would admit, ought to be used.*

BY THE LATE REV. THOMAS CLARK, V. D. M.

CHRISTIAN READER,—

If thou art really a Christian by sweet experience, as Saul of Tarsus was made, then thou surely standest in awe of the divine law, revealed in the holy Scriptures, the only rule of truth and practice, by which all men shall be finally judged: Thou hast been made like him in all humility to bow before the Most High God, and to say as he said, (Acts ix. 6.) "Lord what wilt thou have me to do," i. e. in thy public praises. Wilt thou have me to praise thy blessed name with elegant words of human composure, by some esteemed far superior to the best version of the Book of Psalms? or, Wilt thou have me to praise thy holy Majesty with the sacred words of unerring Revelation? If this is thy serious enquiry, then let me offer thee some *reasons* why it appears a moral duty for thee to avoid the use of human compositions, of uninspired men, in praising God; and to use the Psalms of God's own institution and appointment in worshipping him.

That we ought to avoid the use of human compositions in praising of God, appears clear from the following reasons.

I. *It is unwarrantable.* You can find no commandment of God on divine record (that I know of) requiring you to use any *Imitation*, or any human composure, instead of that Book of Psalms God hath given you. Nor can you learn that ever God inspired any of his own Apostles to alter or change the Psalms, or to make or use any imitations of them in divine worship, under pretence of their being more agreeable to New Testament times.

They must, in their own conceit, be very wise indeed, and have a very high opinion of their own abilities, that think they can contrive Hymns or imitations of Psalms, preferable to those that eternal, divine and unerring Wisdom hath contrived and given you. Would to God you and I had grace sufficient to sing

the 150 sweet Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs, (being is the titles of the three arrangements) which the all-gracious God hath in his love and piety bestowed upon us, without wandering through the world after the swarms of human compositions now extant. You know all the Hymns, all the Antiphones, Missals, Holidays, and Breviaries, brought into the Romish church, one century after another, was still done by some new pretender to a higher pitch of zeal, for improving the worship of God. But for you or I to come before God in solemn praise with any human invention or imitation, I am afraid we shall meet with those awful interrogatories, "Who hath required this imitation at your hands?" Isa. i. 12. and by what authority doest thou these things? and who gave you this authority? And what will you answer when thus questioned? May the Lord keep you and I from being wise above what is written for our rule in the holy Oracles.

2. *To use such an imitation in divine worship is entirely needless, superfluous, and perhaps superstitious.* There is no occasion, no necessity for it in the world; the Book of Psalms God gave you, is abundantly sufficient as it stands, for all the sacred purposes of devotion and praise; it is without spot or wrinkle; it has the stamp of divine authority, and to lay it aside and bring in this imitation, is like offering strange fire on God's altar, as did Nadab and Abibu, Lev. xi. 2. And although temporal judgments are not now perhaps so abundantly poured out on those who dare to reject God's own Psalms and bring imitations in their room and stead; yet, I greatly fear, spiritual judgments are upon those that use them: For, as Zacherias was struck dumb for his unbelief of the divine message, so are they struck dumb in the House of God—their tongues cleave to the roofs of their mouths; they either cannot, or will not sing, even this imitation itself. No: with sorrow I have seen it, they are left to wander vainly in their own counsels, with their own imitations, and are dumb before the Lord, in many worshipping assemblies, all except a few concillators, or singing boys and girls in the gallery; when I hear them, I should surely think I had happened in a Mass-house in Dublin, did I not recollect that I was yet in a professed Protestant country. Had there been any real deficiency or imperfection in God's Book of Psalms, then such an imitation might have had some show or appearance of necessity; but that is very far from being the case, for God's Psalm Book is holy, just, spiritual and perfect. A little shifting and changing from God's Book to an Imitation Book, may for a while please the carnal heart, but God has commanded you not to meddle with them that are given to such changes.

These Psalms which God in old time gave to his Church, were found sufficient for the use of the kings, priests, prophets and saints of God, in Israel some thousands of years, and in the use of them our forefathers, martyrs and reformers obtained much communion with God, and great pleasure and felicity, and what would you have more? We had abundance of Psalms bestowed on us by a gracious and good God; but alas! for our want of understanding of them, our great want of love to them, and our sad want of faith and zeal, to sing these songs of Zion with due propriety and perseverance.

3. *You may not use said imitation because it tends to grieve and offend God's people, and destroy the amiable peace of the Church.*—The using it brings pious people into this sad dilemma; either they must sit still, and see their own God's Book of Psalms neglected and rejected, and say nothing; which would be contrary to that solemn charge that God gave them, to hold fast the form of sound words, and contend earnestly for every article of faith; or else they must speak up against the superfluous use of the imitations and expect to be railed upon for it. Must not this greatly grieve them? Can pious people avoid being grieved and offended to see such tumult, noise and wild disorder raised in the ivory palaces of the Prince of Peace; and all about an *imitation* of God's Book of Psalms, which we had no need of. Will you then use it, while in so doing you expose yourself to that dreadful curse? "Offences must needs come, but wo to that man through whom they come. It were better for him that a millstone was hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than offend one of these little ones." Mat xviii. 6. No doubt, sometimes pious persons, through temptation and corruption, take offence when none is given nor intended to be given them. But that is very far from being the case here; because, they see before their faces these treasures of wisdom and knowledge, the Book of Psalms, broken, torn, militated and massacred to please carnal men, and they see the havoc made on them in God's own house, upon his holy Sabbath day. They see twelve of them condemned to perpetual silence, as unworthy even of imitation; their voice must never more be heard in God's Tabernacle—that is, the 43, 52, 54, 59, 64, 70, 79, 88, 108, 137, and 140. These Psalms are the sincere milk of the word, and to see them torn from the mouths of the babes of grace, is a sight of great cruelty. No doubt they can get them to *read* in prose, but they cannot any more, in many worshipping assemblies, get them to sing as in the days of old; for now every one hath a doctrine and a psalm or a hymn: there's Wesley's Hymns, Whitefield's Hymns, Spalding's Hymns, Mason's Hymns, and Dr. Watts' great bunch of Hymns, *imitations*, &c. Can they be blamed for being grieved and offended, while they see such wild *disorder* forced into the house of the God of *order* and peace, and all for the sake of a new thing, that we stood not in the least need of? To grieve them is to grieve the spirit of God that dwells in them. What impudence is it in any poor, conceited, uninspired man, to form a poem, and then stamp it with the sacred name of a *Hymn*?

4. *Because using said imitation in God's worship, is a conniving with, and becoming art and part guilty with such as reproach and blaspheme that part of God's holy word, called the Book of Psalms.*

Dr. Watts, in his preface to that edition of his *imitation* and Hymns, printed for Rivington, London, 1768, page 5th, says, "The dull indifference—that sits on the faces of a whole assembly while the Psalm is upon the lips must tempt—to suspect the minds of most of the worshippers are absent or unconcerned—I have been long convinced that one great occasion of this evil arises from the *matter* and *words* to which we confine all our songs." Did you ever read another author that had the daring impudence

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to charge the crime of sinners' *dull indifference* in worship upon the *matter* and *words*, that God has put in *his Book of Psalms*? I suppose not. If the divine *matter* and sacred *words* of the *Psalms* have that dangerous influence upon worshippers, he asserts, did not God do us a great hurt to put such a *dulling* book in our hands, was not this instead of a fish to give his children a scorpion? And will Dr. Watts' *imitation* of such *dulling matter* and *words* remove the dreadful crime? Does not trial, made by twenty years experience, loudly proclaim the contrary, to all the attentive world, who see so few sing God's praise, either in their families or churches? In old time, a pious king, who often complained of *dullness* and darkness, in God's worship, says, "I will never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me." Ps. cxix. 93. Luther used to call the Psalms *God's little Bible*, and summary of the Old Testament. I read of a girl, aged five years, whose conversion was begun while she joined her parents in singing these Psalms one morning, as was the daily custom of the family before breakfast; she persevered in piety till she was 80 years old, and died in triumph.

He further saith in his preface, "Some of them" (the Songs of Zion) "are almost *OPPOSITE* to the spirit of the gospel," that is the Spirit of God. How can any man imagine that any part of God's word can be either *almost* or altogether *opposite* to his Spirit. None but Deists pretend to find any opposition between God's *word* and his *Spirit*, nor between one part of the word and another. The *seeming oppositions* in Scripture, have been long since clearly explained and reconciled, in many pious and sacred books, particularly in a Latin treatise, called *Lux in Tenebris*.

Again, in said preface, he says, "When, our souls are raised a little above the earth, in the beginning of a Psalm, we are checked on a sudden in our ascent towards heaven, by some expression—fit only to be sung in a worldly sanctuary."

Surely God's kind design in giving us these Psalms was, that they might be a happy means to promote our *ascent* towards heaven; and can God so far miss his gracious design, that any of them will check us in our *ascent*. The most base songs that ever were composed by lewd ballad makers, could not be charged with a more barbarous spiritual murder, than this of driving a poor soul *back*, when it had happily got on its *ascent towards heaven*.

Another reproach expressed in said preface is—"When we are just entering into an evangelical frame, yet the very next line perhaps, which the clerk parcels out to us, hath something in it so extremely Jewish and cloudy, that it darkens the sight of God, the *Saviour*."

How base this reproach, while it is certain, that a great personage, in old times, looked through the Psalms, and through all the Jewish cloudiness in them, and by them got a sweet and clear sight of God the Saviour, so that being thereby raised up from his dejections, he with the voice of devout joy and gladness sings: Ps. 109, 24.

My comfort and my heart's delight thy testimonies be  
And they in all my doubts and fears are comforters to me.

One of the greatest heroes that ever commanded an army, who never lost a siege nor a battle, joyfully celebrates the commendations of all-revealed truth, of which the Book of Psalms is a special part, saying, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Ps. cxix, 105.

Another slander asserted in said preface is—"While we are kindling into divine love by meditations of the loving kindness of the Lord—within a few lines some dreadful curse against man, is proposed to our lips, *that God would add iniquity to their iniquity*—which is so contrary to the new commandment of loving our enemies—our hearts are as it were forbid the pursuit of the song, and the worship grows dull of mere necessity."

The God of truth says, *all Scripture* (the excluded Psalms not excepted) *is given by inspiration of God and is profitable*; but if Dr. Watts' saying here be true, that part of it is *detestable*: For here again the *matter* and the *words* of the sweet Book of Psalms, is accused of *quenching divine love* kindling in the worshippers, being so dreadful and so contrary to the new commandment of loving our enemies. But you know they are ill, very ill, acquainted with the law, that see not a clear consistency between its curses and its precepts. Could any man be justly reckoned guilty of breaking the new command of love to his enemy, while he faithfully warned him, that if he went on robbing and murdering, an ignominious death would be his portion? As little is it contrary to said new commandment, for God, in his Book of Psalms, to warn and tell us, that if we live a lewd life, adding sin to sin, and die unconverted, he then, as a righteous Judge, will number up our crimes, adding one after another, in the numbering of them, till the sum be fully deserving eternal woe. Who knows not that this is the voice of pure and holy justice, expressed in the dreadful law curse, with a gracious design to alarm us as rational men to fly to Jesus for pardon and holiness. And though the words of the curse are translated in the form of a *prayer*, yet they could as well be expressed in the form of a *prophecy*, which they really are; telling a sinner before hand, that if he goes on in his trespasses, adding new iniquity to his old iniquity, the iniquity of this new year to the account of the iniquities he did in the old year, then God will add to his lot, all the torments mentioned in this book.

David was a prophet and a type of Jesus Christ. The God who inspired him to write these Psalms is not to be presumptuously challenged why he inspired him to write such and such words. If David had been speaking even of his personal enemies, it would not be the voice of revenge. He fasted, mourned, prayed, and wore sackcloth for them that rewarded him ill for good. Ps. 35. 14. So did Paul travail as it were in birth, to have Christ formed in those, who said "his bodily presence was weak and contemptible;" and reproached him as "walking according to the flesh. - 2 Cor. x. 2. 10. Yet under inspiration of God, he says, "if any bring, or preach any other gospel, let him be accursed." Gal. i. 8. 9. Now this was not the voice of revenge, but his calmly telling the truth, that if they deviated from the gospel, God would add that to the former great account of their iniquity.

If it dull the worship so much to mention any of the wraths that await sinners, then Dr. Watts' *imitation* or image of the Psalms will dull the worship too, and should be expelled; for in the 7th page of said edition, he sings:

On impious wretches he shall rain,  
Tempe t of brimstone fire and death;  
Such as he kindled in the plain  
Of Sodom, with his angry breath.

Although the sacred words and divine matter, be here erroneously blamed for causing the "worship to grow dull of mere necessity," yet I aver, that the blame lies in the unbelief, carnality and enmity of depraved human nature, which is so high in command, that it not only makes the worshippers grow dull and weary of the song, but it actually arrests negroes, peasants, merchants, soldiers, colonels, generals, governors, kings and queens at home in their own apartments on the Sabbath day. For months, for years, they can have no inclination to public worship; they avoid the Kirk as a pest house: So great is the power, so extensive the command of these accursed corrupt dispositions of the human soul.

Depraved men of all ranks have been the willing slaves to the wide extended empire of *Enmity* these five thousand years; yet they know it not, nor will they believe the mournful truth, though one rise from the grave and tell it. Are there not some persons upon whom God has bestowed very large, and affluent fortunes of wealth, who are yet under the bonds of so strange an aversion, that they have not been twice at public worship these seven years, nor have given one shilling of all that wealth, to support the worship of that great God, on whose bounty they live, and in whose raiment they glitter like tinselled butterflies.

5. *Because while you use not the Book of Psalms itself, only an imitation of it, you expose yourself to all the curses that divine law and justice denounces against such as add to, or diminish from his word.*

If you connive with the daring diminishers, for by using it, you as really bar the Book of Psalms out of use and practice, in public worship, as really as if you had gone and hired the book-binder to omit binding it in with the canonical books of the Bible; for what avails it to have it bound in among the sacred books in prose, while it is never sung. The other canonical books were given by God to be *read*, but the Book of Psalms was given us for a double use, to be both *read* and *sung*, in faith. Now, it is entirely expelled and abolished from being sung, and an image or imitation of it put in its room, in the house of the Lord. It is awfully dangerous for you to be one of that number who conspire to diminish twelve psalms from God's system of psalmody. Thou shalt not add to the word that I command thee, nor diminish ought from it. Deut. iv. 2. If any man shall take away from the words of this book, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life. Rev. xxii. 19. Thou sawest a thief, (that robbed the church of twelve psalms) and thou didst join with him—I will reprove thee. Ps. i. 18. 21.

My dear reader, see how the diminishing or taking away, goes on in two instances among many. Ps. iv. 4, 5. You have six precepts in the Assembly's Version which are as follows:

Fear and sin not, talk with your heart in bed, and silent be,  
Offerings present of righteousness, and in the Lord trust ye.

In the imitation it runs thus:

When our obedient hands have done a thousand works of righteousness,  
We put our trust in God alone, and glory in his pard'ning grace.

Is not every one of the said six moral precepts here past over in silence, and the very sweet warrant for sinners presenting the Redeemer's righteousness, as a sin offering to God taken away, and a song left us about a thousand works of righteousness done by our own hands, though strictly speaking, all our righteousness is filthy rags.

I have, not yet had time to examine this imitation strictly as to its orthodoxy, but I observe in the Assembly's Version, it runs thus in Ps. li. 2. 3.

Me cleanse from sin, and thro'ly wash from mine iniquity:  
For my transgressions I confess, my sin I ever see.

How widely different is the imitation of these verses.

Should'st thou condemn my soul to hell,  
And crush my flesh to dust;  
Heaven would approve thy vengeance well,  
And earth must own it just

Is not this a dangerous doctrine? How can a soul be condemned to hell after conversion! God says no such thing in the original. This imitation represents David speaking as an unpardoned soul, though God had sent Nathan to tell him he was actually pardoned: How unjust would it be after that pardon *to damn him to hell?* What Heaven is it, would approve such damnation?

No doubt the Dr. affirms, that he is far from reproaching the sacred Book of Psalms, for he says, page 8th, in said preface—"Far be it from my thoughts to lay aside the Book of Psalms, in public worship; few can pretend so great value for them as myself—but it must be acknowledged still, that there are a thousand lines in it which were not made for a church in our day to assume as its own."

But by means of his degrading and reproaching the Book of Psalms, it is now laid entirely aside, for above twenty years past; it is as effectually laid aside, as if he had warmly petitioned all the synods, councils, and associations, on this continent, and obtained their solemn vote for its exclusion; and as surely laid aside as if he had petitioned all the legislatures on the continent, and got them to pass acts that none of them should be printed or sung any more, from one end of the United States to the other. For he has in print publicly blamed the matter and words of God's Book of Psalms, as guilty of dulling the worshipping assemblies—he charges it with checking them in their ascent towards heaven—he degrades it as darkening their sight of God the Saviour—and condemns it as openly contradicting both the Spirit of God in the Gospel, and the new commandment. Was ever any book wrote or printed on this continent, so vilified and blasphemed in more opprobrious language, or charged with more pernicious injury to men's souls; and yet he pretends a great value for it. After its reputation as a part of God's unerring word, is ruined and abolished, then a clear large way is made for introducing his IMITATION in its place, under a great many fine

characters—as being far more suitable to the various cases of the souls of Christians—far more agreeable to New Testament language and times, &c. &c. Thus as Joab did to Amasa, he kisses it with a pretence of great value for it, and in the mean time stabs it under the fifth rib, with an opprobrious reproach: And is it not dangerous, dreadfully dangerous, to connive with such reproach and blasphemy. And his diminishing not only twelve psalms from it as unworthy of imitation, but blaspheming the whole, as hindering men from ascending to heaven, and darkening their sight of that blessed Saviour sent by God to bring lost sons to glory. How tremendous the danger to join in such daring diminishing from the number, the reputation, and the use of God's Book of Psalms! How awfully hazardous to join in adding and using a new imitation in room thereof, that is so unwarrantable, so superfluous, so destructive to the peace of the church, and offensive to the children of God! How aggravated the sin to commit all this in the face of God's curses, his four times repeated curses, that are more loud than ten thousand thunders—“Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.” Prov. xxx. 6. “All liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.” Rev. xxi. 9. “Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law, and all the people shall say, Amen. Duet. xxvii. 26.

*But now that we ought to use God's own Book of Psalms, in praising his name, is clear from these REASONS.*

I. *Because God commanded us to praise his name with the words of David and Asaph.* 2 Chron. xxix. 30. We have two instances of persons inspired to make and sing a song, on two special occasions, viz. Moses and Deborah, but after the eternal Spirit spoke all the words of the Book of Psalms, by his holy chosen penmen, it appears that he did it for this special purpose, that we should serve him in solemn praises, with those most suitable words, devised by his own unerring wisdom. In Psalm cii. 18. God declares that, “This shall be written for the generation to come, and the people who shall be created shall praise the Lord.” God wrote out the Book of Psalms, that with them the generations to come into life, even in the New Testament times, should praise the Lord with these very words.

The pious and learned commentator, Henry, on Psalm cxlv. 1. thus explains it, “I will bless thee forever and ever.” “This intimates, says he, that the psalms he (viz. the Psalmist) penned, should be made use of in praising God by the church, to the end of time.”

It is rational to suppose, that while we essay to pay unto God the tribute of praise and glory, which we owe to him, night and morn in our families, or in public assemblies, on the first day of the week, that we pay it to him in language which he himself devised: Must it not be the most agreeable to the Majesty of Heaven!

Other books of divine Revelation are given us to be read and to be meditated upon, but the Book of Psalms is given us that we may not only read it, and meditate on it, but sing it also with the spirit and understanding, with devout fervour and divine delight, in the assemblies of his saints, on his holy Sabbaths, as well as in private families.



Historians say, that the English Parliament, having convened about one hundred pious and learned divines, at Westminster, London, to compile a Confession of Faith, Catechisms, Larger and Shorter, Directory for Public and Family Worship, and Form of Presbyterian Church Government, about the year 1643, laid before them an imperfect draught of this Version of the Book of Psalms, made by the pious Sir Francis Rouse, Baronet of Old England, recommending it to their serious examination: who, with laborious and pious care, altered, corrected, and approved it, unanimously, and returned it to Parliament, and both houses also did then approve and authorise it to be sung in families and churches, throughout that kingdom.

The pious and learned Samuel Rutherford, Professor of Divinity in the University of St. Andrews, and the other Scots members of said Westminster Assembly, then sent said authorised Version north to the General Assembly of the national church of Scotland, at that time sitting at Edinburgh, whose committees had it under consideration several years, and having further corrected and amended it, the General Assembly did approve it, and authorise it to be sung in families and churches, as did the Scots Parliament also authorise it throughout that realm.

The great and learned Dr. Ridgley, in his Body of Divinity, page 572, speaking of the Metre Version of the Psalms, says, "That which comes nearest the original, is the New England and Scots, (i. e. the said Assembly's Version) which, I think, says he, is much preferable to the former."

So after near seven years labour and critical care, spent on it by both Assemblies and Parliaments, it may be called the Assemblies' Metre Version of the Book of Psalms; and they have brought it so very close to represent the same ideas of things, the same doctrines, precepts, &c. as the Hebrew Psalms, wrote also in Hebrew Metre, that those who use it may with great propriety be said to praise the Lord with the words of David and Asaph. &c. according to the commandment before cited. 2 Chron. xxix. 30.

II. Another reason why we ought to use the Assembly's Metre Version is, because in using it we *follow the pious example of the flock of Christ*, the saints in scripture, &c. We are commanded to go forth by the footsteps of that happy flock. Cant. i. 8. This is and was their good old way to praise the Lord; we have the laudable example of the pious king, Jehosaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 21. He appointed singers unto the Lord, who, with his army on their march to battle, sung the divine words of David, Ps. cxxxvi. 1, saying, "Praise ye the Lord, for his mercy endureth forever," &c. And when they returned so victorious, to render thanks to God, we have reason to suppose they used the same Psalm Book.

About two hundred years after, when penitent Israel returned from Babylonish captivity, and were laying the foundation of the temple. Ezra iii. 11: "They sung together by course in praising and giving thanks to the Lord," in the words of David. Ps. cxxxvi. 1. "For his mercy endureth forever towards Israel." On both these new occasions they sung no new composures of their own, but the Book of Psalms being completed, they found in it a Psalm that suited them very well, and God accepted them in it, and hath made a record of it, in the volumes of his Book, for our learning and instruction.

In New Testament times, John, the beloved disciple, in divine vision, Rev. xv. 4., saw and heard those who had escaped the strong powers of Antichrist's delusions, praising the Lord with the words of David—Ps. lxxxvi. 9. "All nations whom thou madst shall come and worship before thee." This he saw and heard in the Heaven of the New Testament Church.

Likewise, at the final fall of Antichrist, the New Testament Church, on that new and glorious occasion, sings no new imitation or composition of human device, but sings the words of God's old Book of Psalms. Ps. cxxxiv. 1. "Praise our God all ye that fear him." Nor do we hear of any dullness appearing on their faces, while they confined their songs to the old matter and words of David and Asaph, or other parts of that book known by the common name of the Book of Psalms to the Churches, ever since they were revealed. Luke xx. 42. Acts i. 20.

Historians say, that for the first three hundred years after Christ's incarnation, the Christian churches sung the praises of God in the words of the Book of Psalms, each nation in its own language, till the fourth century, then they would no longer confine their songs to the matter and words of God's devising, in the old Book of Psalms, but new compositions were made, and new benches of Canonic Singers or Cancellators, were set up in their churches. Exorcists and other superstitions were also then invented. Tertullian says, that "after celebrating the Lord's Supper they sung a hymn, either out of the Bible or one of their own composing." It seems reckoning their own hymns as good to use as the Bible ones. Paulus Samosetanus set up some on Easter day, "to sing an hymn to his own praise in the church." Euseb. Lib. 7. page 281. Thus men fond, very fond, of their own new inventions, in religious worship, as they are fond of new fashions of dress, are still set on changes: God says, "Meddle not with them that are given to such changes." The Bible and the histories of past ages, hold up to us many sad spectacles, of men's most egregious and criminal folly, in setting up new modes of worship, which they addressed to God under various pictures, both in his praises and other parts of his worship, perhaps—during eleven hundred and sixty years gross idolatry, for which they were smitten with many terrible judgments, until the Reformation, 1560.

Then our reformer, spirited by God, returned to use a Metre Version of the Book of Psalms, in the praising of God, made by some of the ministers, I suppose, but used no imitations, that I know of, there, from Anno 1560, until November 14th, 1645. That the Assembly's Version was authorised in England, by both Houses of Parliament, as a part of that uniformity in worship, then practised by our pious ancestors; nor could all the powers of hell, nor bloody tyranny of Charles II. and his brother, for twenty-eight years, compel them to recede from the use of this Version of the Psalms, or any other part or that happy system of Reformation in Religion, to which they had attained, and to which they had laudably sworn an adherence by solemn league and covenant. It is said about sixty thousand of them suffered the loss of eleven millions, by fines; many were banished to Holland and America, after wandering long on the mountains; numbers suffered in gaols and dungeons and in fields; and

on scaffolds eighteen thousand suffered. Yet, these pious martyrs, sung this Version through all these dangers, and on the verge of dissolution, with their dying breath and devout joy, and were accepted of God.

The first noble and devout settlers in New England, whose true piety will be dearly esteemed by the religious, to the latest annals of America; they sung this version in their families and churches with heavenly fervour and divine delight. How forbidding then is it for us to neglect or reject this version, where-with our pious ancestors praised the Lord, and found acceptance through the merits of Emanuel.

“Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein and ye shall find rest for your souls; but they said we will not walk therein.” Jer. vi. 16.

III. We ought to use the Assembly’s Version of the Book of Psalms, because *it best suits the various cases of Christian souls in our times*, and is most for edification.

Christian reader, commune with thine own heart awhile, and ask what case it is in, then search this Book of Psalms, and see if thou canst find a sentence in it that suits thy case. Doest thou find by recollection that thy sins are more than thou canst number, and heinous in their nature: That thou art therefore in the utmost danger of eternal fire, and greatly afraid night and day, then read, Ps. xxxviii. 4 Ps. xl. 12. Ps. cxix. 20. The Lord sent unto thee a word of salvation. Ps. 1. 8.

I, for thy sacrifices few, reprove thee never will,  
Nor for burnt offerings to have been before me offer’d still.—[Ps. lxxviii. 18.  
Thou hast received gifts for men, for such as did rebel;  
Yea, even for them, that God the Lord in midst of them might dwell.

Does thy sinful inclinations still grievously prevail against all thy prayers and resolutions, and vows; see Ps. lxxv. 3.

Iniquities, I must confess, prevail against me do,  
But as for our transgressions them purge away shalt thou.

Ps. 1. 7.—God, even thy God, I am.

Is thy spiritual willingness and strength for reading, praying, hearing, and keeping the Sabbath, greatly decayed and gone: Is this thy case and thy grief, so it was with David. Ps. xx. 15. cii. 23. See a word of salvation sent to thee. Ps. cx. 4.

A willing people in the day of pow’r shall come to thee;  
In holy beauties from morn’s womb, thy youth like dew shall be.  
With him mine hand shall ’stablished be,  
Mine arm shall make him strong. Ps. lxxxix. 21.

Art thou almost overcome with spiritual deadness in any religious duty, which is a great trouble to thee; see Ps. cxxxviii. 7.

Tho’ I in the midst of trouble walk,  
I life from thee shalt have.

Art thou laid sick on a bed of languishing, and got exceedingly weak, see, so far as it tends to the interests of true religion in thy soul, he will perform this promise that suits thy case. Ps. xli. 3.

God will give strength when he in bed of languishing doth mourn,  
And in his sickness sore, O Lord; thou all his bed will turn.

Hast thou long prayed for a certain mercy thou standest in

need of, to thyself or to thy friend, and yet there appears no sign of a gracious answer, so that thou fearest greatly God will never regard nor answer thy languid prayers, for that mercy; then read. Ps. xxii. 2.

All day my God to thee, I cry, yet am not heard by thee;  
And in the seasons of the night, I cannot silent be. Ps. cii. 17.  
Their prayer will he not despise, by him it shall be heard.

Art thou strongly solicited by Satan or by some person, to do what is called a little sin, or a secret sin, or to neglect some particular duty, to the great dishonour of God, and hurt of thy soul; see the promise of Christ to the sinner that looks to him. Ps. lxxxix. 21.

On him the foe shall not exact,  
Nor son of mischief wrong.

Is thy soul much grieved because thou seest little or no signs of true piety in any of thy relations, and it often grieves thee; see Ps. xxii. 27.

All ends of the earth remember shall, and turn the Lord unto,  
All kindreds of the nations to him shall homage do.

Although thy frugality and industry has been constant, and thy prayers frequent for thy daily bread, yet still thou remainest oppressed in deep poverty; see Ps. lxxii. 12.

The poor man and the indigent in mercy he shall spare;  
He shall preserve alive the souls of those that needy are.  
For he the needy shall preserve when he to him doth call;  
The poor also, and him that hath no help of man at all.

Does thy wonted familiar friend in whom thou trusted, and who did eat of thy bread, now lift up his voice against thee unprovoked, his tongue stabs thy good name as an envenomed dart, behind thy back, perhaps, laying grievous things to thy charge, which thou knowest not; then see Ps. xxxviii. 11. Ps. xli. 8. 9.

Thy way to God commit, him trust, it bring to pass shall he,  
And like unto the light he shall thy righteousness display. Ps. xxxvii. 6.  
And he thy judgments shall bring forth like noon-tide of the day.

The Book of Psalms is well suited to many other cases, and as Gerhard, an eminent divine, says—They are a glass of divine grace, representing to us the sweet smiling countenance of God in Christ, a most accurate anatomy of a Christian soul, delineating all its afflictions, motions, temptations, and plunges, with their proper remedies.”

The learned Ainsworth, in his preface to it, says—“ David, by manifold Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs, sets forth the praises of God—and these his Psalms have ever since by the Church of Israel, by Christ and his Apostles, and by the saints in all ages, been received and honoured as the Oracles of God—Sung in the public assemblies, as in God’s Tabernacle and Temple, where they sung praise unto the Lord, with the words of David and Asaph, the Seer.

And though the Reverend and learned Dr. Watts hath in great mistake, wrote the above reproaches on the Book of Psalms, (I suppose under a fit temptation) yet I still hope he was a very pious man. His writing on Logick, and some other subjects, will be of permanent advantage to the learned, and would do lasting honour to his name; but the best of men are but men at the best.

*H. A. Connelly.*

**Supplement**

*Harris, James,*

TO THE

**PLOUGHMAN'S LETTER,**

IN ANSWER

TO SOME INQUIRIES

**ON PSALMODY,**

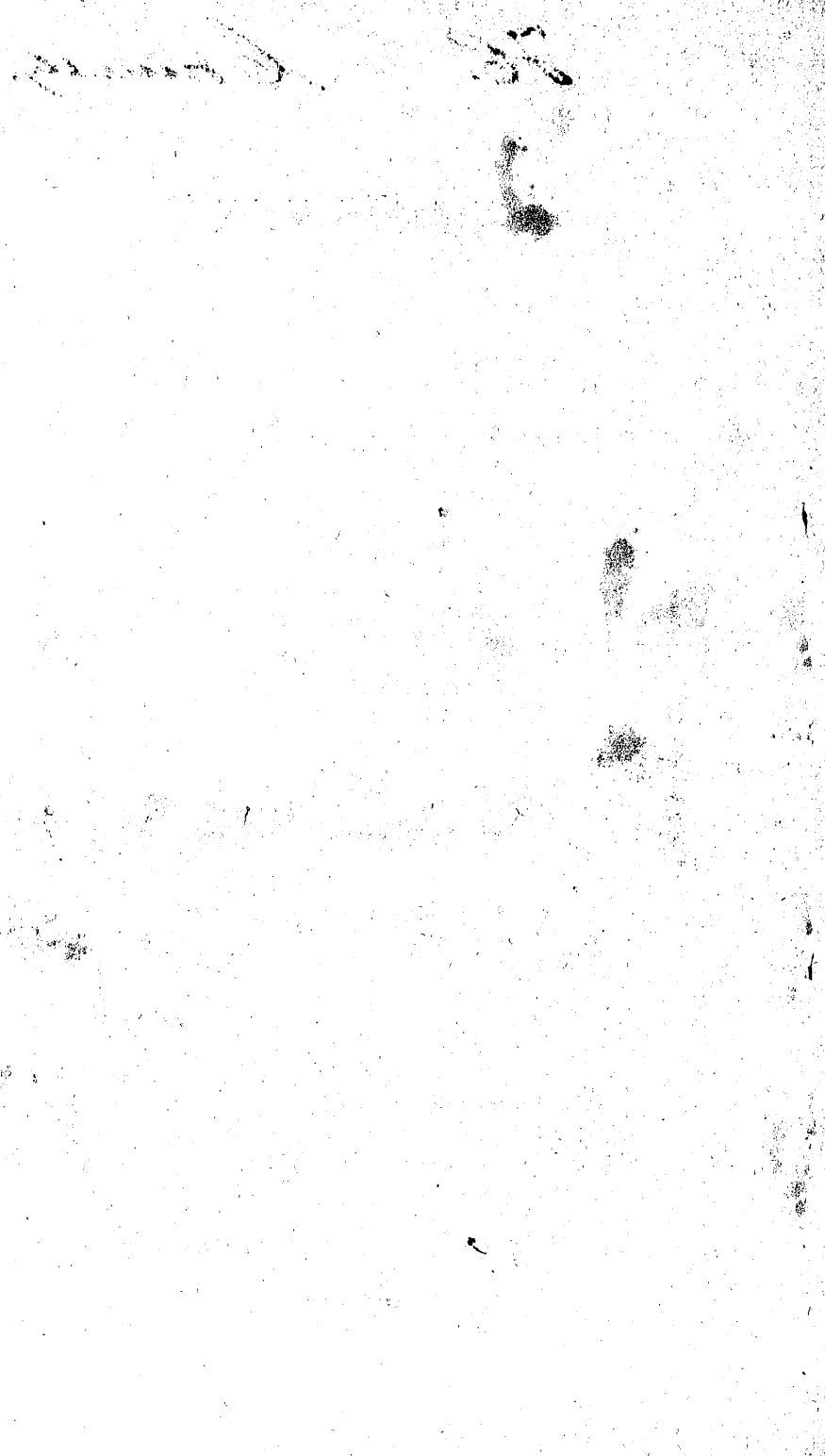
BY HIS YOUNG FRIENDS.



CHARLOTTE, N. C.

PRINTED BY LEMUEL BINGHAM,

.....  
1827.



## A SUPPLEMENT, &c.

YORK DISTRICT, S. C. SEPT. 3, 1827.

*My dear young friends:* It being more than three years since I wrote last to you, I will now offer you a few more ideas on Psalmody, especially as there is a call at present for some one to write, and none that I have spoken to, will undertake it.

The first thing I will begin with, is the conduct of Dr. Watts in leaving out verses, and making the Psalms shorter. The first I shall notice, is the 18th Psalm, which is 19 verses shorter. The 22d is 7 shorter; the 35th is 22 shorter; the 89th is 11 shorter; the 105th is 25 shorter; the 119th is 82 shorter; the 136th is 16 shorter. In these 7 Psalms there are 182 verses left out. And if it were only so many dollars, short of what it should be, it would be worthy of particular notice in settling an account properly. Nevertheless, one of these verses left out is of more value to the Church than thousands of dollars. The 136th Ps. which is so much curtailed, was sung at the dedication of the Temple; and the cloudy Pillar filled it while thus exercised, *2 Chron.* v. 13. Also they sung the same at the laying of the foundation of the second Temple, *Ezra* iii. 10 & 11. And while they sung the *same* Psalm, their feelings were very different. Some were weeping; others were shouting for joy. This shews us that the foundation that Wottonians build so much upon is false, viz. that we should make our songs of praise according to our *frame*. If the Israelites had acted on the Wottonian principle, they would have made two songs at least, and set aside the 136th Ps. which God had given them. But the Israelites' principles and practice were somewhat like those of the Seceders; and that is, to endeavor to bring their hearts and frames up to what God has given in his own Songs of praise. To take it the other way, we must have as many songs as singers. This principle at once destroys all social praise. Strange, that they lay that for a foundation, which will destroy social praise altogether; but no stranger than true. If any one had a right to make an appropriate hymn, Christ might have made one to sing on the Cross; as such an event never did take place in time, nor ever shall. But he set us an example to take the word of God as the matter of our songs of praise and prayer also; for he made use of the Psalms of David in both. And we think that his prayers and praises were accepted

of God ; and why not ours, if we exercise faith on his word as he did ? In Exodus xv. we find that Moses and the children of Israel sang one song, notwithstanding the different feelings of so great a number, being more than 600,000 warriors. Nor did Miriam make an appropriate hymn, but sung the very same words that the rest did. It would be a terrible restriction on modern worshippers at a Camp Meeting, to be confined to God's word for their songs of praise, especially the Psalms of David. They would take christian liberty, as they call it, to sing as they please; without having respect to any command, human or divine.

You may see the evil of altering God's word as Dr. Watts has done, as the Dr. acted in the same way that the serpent, (or the *Devil* in the form of a serpent,) did ; *Gen.* iii. 4 & 5. In the 4th verse he added "*not ;*"—"ye shall (not) surely die." In the 5th verse he added "and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Our first parents taking it with this alteration, and acting on it in this way, it became the ruin of the whole human family. Yet Wattonians would have us to take the book of Psalms as W. has added to, and diminished from it. And can we expect any better effect to result from our using it in that way, than what attended our first parents using it in the same way ? It made them fly from the voice of God and hide themselves, and caused them to shun the light. A correct history of the Church will show a similar effect on those that treat God's word in this way.\*

A translation of the Scriptures is not considered any alteration of the word of God. But Dr. Watts has made the 109th Ps. 25 verses shorter, and in place of setting forth the righteous judgments of God on the wicked, he patches up 6 verses which he calls "*love to enemies.*" Certainly this is acting in the very way that the Serpent did, as mentioned above in Genesis. God told our first parents, "in the day thou eatest thereof thou *shalt* surely die : " the Serpent said "*ye shall not.*" God says in the 109th Ps. that he will let his wrath fall on the wicked : Watts says, Christ will bless. The last line of the 4th verse in W. is,

"And blest his foes in death."

I defy any one to show such an idea in the 109th Psalm.

For Dr. W. to bless those whom God curses, is as sinful as to curse those whom God blesses. And to bless, when God curses, is Serpent or Devil like, be it Watts, be it what, or be it who it may. To be more merciful than God is, is what we are not commanded. Did God approve of those that kept back their sword from blood in destroying those Canaanites, who were devoted to destruction ?

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\* When God's word is altered as the Serpent and Watts have done, it is no more the word of God, but the word of them that altered it.



*Numbers xxxiii. 55.* Did not Hiel pay dear for building Jericho? *1 Kings xvi. 34.* Did not Saul lose the kingdom of Israel for sparing Agag? *1 Sam. xv. 18-35.* It does not become the servants of God to say or do, contrary to what their master saith; and all who do themselves act, or try to get others to act, contrary to the command of God, shew plainly that they are acting under another master.

Dr. W. might as well have said, "I bless you, O ye Scribes, Pharisees, Hypocrites," as to have said what he did in the 109th Ps.; as the same characters are mentioned there as in *Matthew xxiii. 13.* And in the 109th Ps. from the 1st to the 6th verse, and in the 20th verse, it is in the plural number, and so will not all be applicable to Judas, but to all of that character.

I should like to hear what spiritual meaning a Wattonian would give to Leviticus xxii. 24—"Ye shall not offer unto the Lord that which is *bruised*, or *crushed*, or *broken*, or *cut*; neither shall ye make any offering thereof in your land." I think that a lamb, that had passed through between the Cog-wheel, and the Trunnel-head of a Grist Mill, would not be more *bruised*, *crushed*, *broken*, and *cut*, than Dr. Watts has *bruised*, *crushed*, *broken*, and *cut* the 109th Psalm; and yet the Wattonians prefer it to a sound offering.

When I first began to study the subject of Psalmody, I would read a portion of the Psalms, and then the Exposition of Mr. Henry, after which I would compare Watts' Psalms with the Exposition. I soon found that he did not pretend to keep any regular order. But when I came to the 109th Ps. I found that the *Dogs* had left *more* of the *carcase of Jezebel*, than *Dr. Watts* had left of *that Psalm*. Indeed it cannot be said that it is the 109th Psalm; for there is not the *scull*, and *feet*, and *palms of the hands* there, as there was of Jezebel, when they went to bury her.

God commanded Ezekiel, *Chap. iii. 17, 18*—"When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand." Now, has Dr. Watts, in the 109th Ps. said unto the wicked man that he shall surely die? Or has he given him warning of his danger, and so delivered his own soul? Or rather has he not reversed it, and said, that he shall *not* die? We are bound to obey those commands of God which have no reason annexed to them, much more when they have, as set forth in the above mentioned Chapter. Blood will be required at all such Watchmen, as lead their hearers on to such dangerous undertakings, as to reverse God's word, either in principle or practice. For Dr. W. to pretend to have the example of Christ for his blessing Christ's enemies in the 109th Ps. is as much as to say, that the will

of *God* in his word, is not the will of *Christ*. This plan would undo the whole plan of salvation; for if we do not believe that the will of the Father, and the will of Christ is the same, we have no sure ground to stand on. Christ, when on the cross, did not pray for the characters mentioned in the 109th Ps., but for such as were *forced* to crucify him. The Roman soldiers did not hear his trial before Pontius Pilate perhaps, and so did not know his innocence. We cannot think that he meant the Scribes and Pharisees who were his malicious foes, when he prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." These knew more than the Roman soldiers did, and of course knew what they themselves did. It was not so with the soldiers;—"Now, when the Centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man." Christ's prayer on the cross was a Mediatorial prayer, and must agree with another of his prayers, *John xvii. 9.* "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." These two prayers are perfectly consistent with each other; and those characters in the 109th Ps. are, of course, not prayed for in his mediatorial prayer. Yet Watts saith in the last line of the 4th verse,

"And blest his foes in death."

In Rouse's Version it is,

"And let his prayer be turn'd to sin,  
"When he shall call on thee."

Dr. Watts saith in his Preface to his Psalms—"Blessed be God) we are not confined to the words of any man in our public solemnities." Now what did Dr. Watts mean by this? In the first place, he gives us his principles, as it respects his not being under the control of any man; for you must know that Dr. Watts was a proper *Independent*, subject to no set of men. This information I had from Mr. Edmonds, a very respectable Clergyman of the Gen. Assembly Church in S. C. He said that he was personally acquainted with Dr. Watts, and knew his manner of life, and knew him to be Independent in principle and practice. He was too proud to acknowledge any man fit for him to associate with in public solemnities. No wonder that he thought thus of men and their performances, when he thought that the Divine Songs were not fit for him to use, until they came through his correcting hand. And he *thanks God* for this liberty! It may be inquired how he came by this liberty. Perhaps it was promised, and given him, by the same one, that promised to give to our Saviour the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them!

According to the Dr's. own words, we are not confined to his Psalms or Hymns. Suppose that we should put in practice the thing

that the Dr. says he had in view, viz. that the Clerk should substitute some other word, than the one in the line given out, according to his pleasure; and that he should say, "*Curse*" instead of "*Bless*," would it not show that the Clerk had too much in his power? Or were he to reverse it, as the Dr. himself did, and put "*bless*," for some other "unpleasant word" which God himself had given, would it not be a very material thing? Have the Clerks in our Legislative Bodies, or in our Courts of Law, this privilege? If they had, could they not make a paper read what they pleased, and destroy itself? And why not the same in a Song of praise? With this privilege, a good Clerk in any Denomination, could slip in a word when he wanted, and so make it suit his own principles, be he Arminian, Deist, or any thing else.

But if the Dr. means that we are not confined to the words of any inspired man, such as David, Asaph, &c. then he will appear in his true character as a *Deist*, who would have all other books as well as the Psalms modelled by himself and others of the same cast, to their own mind. The liberty, which Watts gives to the Clerks, is the same that he took himself, where he says in his Preface to one of the Psalms, "In some places, among the words, *Law, Commands, Judgments, Testimonies*, I have used *Gospel, Word, Grace, Truth, Promises*, &c." Were not these the words of an inspired man, that he was taking this liberty with? Certainly they were; and a very important part of Revelation where they are found, if any part can be more so than another. Watts doth this under a pretence of its being more agreeable to the New Testament. This is *to sugar over his Deistical Pills*. The truth is, there is no part of divine Revelation, but what is in New Testament language; for instance, the first promise that was given to our first parents, that the Seed of the Woman should bruise the head of the *Serpent*, was in N. Testament language, or the same language that was used in the N. Testament. It is said in 2 *Cor.* xi. 3—"As the *Serpent* beguiled Eve," &c.; and in *Rev.* xii. 9. "that old *Serpent*"—that is, the same one that was to have his head bruised, according to the first promise. If Watts had said that he had substituted European, for Asiatic language, it would have had some color of common sense, but the way it is used by him and his friends makes nonsense. If there had been any part of the Old Testament language that was not known under the New, then there might be some ground for Watts to go on; but until that is shown, we will hold our opinion of his unmeaning language. But I shall let scholars decide this matter, for I am none.

The word "*law*" which Watts has thrown out, and substituted some other one, as more suitable to the N. Testament, is used 38

times in the N. Testament. I wonder how often W. would have a term mentioned in the N. Testament, to make it N. Testament language. The word "*truth*" and "*grace*" which W. has substituted in the place of "*law*," is not as often mentioned in the N. Testament as the word *law*; and yet W. has the impudence to hold it forth to the world as if it were not suitable to the N. Testament. I am sure there is not a term or word that is made use of in the Old or New Testament either, that is more plain and easy to be understood, than the word *law* is; nor will it ever, to the end of the world, become an obsolete word. And for Dr. Watts' taking from the word of God, words of such importance, and substituting others that are not of the same meaning, I call him a *Deist*. It is not necessary to constitute a Deist, that a man should deny the whole of Divine Revelation. If he admits a principle, the result of which would lead to the destruction or denial of God's word, he deserves the name. Would not a man deserve the name of a *thief*, if he would break a lock, go into the house, take but one article, leave the door open, and allow others to go in and substitute one article for another, as a Newspaper for a handful of Bank notes, or any thing else at pleasure? Beyond any doubt he would. And has not Watts broken the lock that God himself has put on every word of the O. Testament, as well as the New? *Revelations* xxii. 18, 19. And has he not confessed, in his Preface, that he has taken five *important words*, and substituted others of his own devising; and allowed the Clerks of Congregations the same privilege? Now suppose that W. has only thrown away the tenth part of the book of Psalms, which is a very moderate calculation; that the next, who would undertake the Digest, would only leave one tenth of the Psalms; that a third would throw away the five books of Moses; that a fourth would throw out Kings and Chronicles;—then, at this rate, the whole of God's word would be laid aside, or stolen, or lost. Would you think that he, who broke the lock, and made the first grab, would be free from guilt? Certainly not.

The Dr. says, "where any unpleasant word is found, he that leads the worship may substitute a better." The *unpleasant* and *better* words are, as the notion or sentiment of him that leads the worship is. We will suppose the leader to be a man under the reigning power and dominion of sin. Then any word that would awaken his conscience or shew him his dangerous situation, would be an *unpleasant* word; and any word that would encourage him in sin and lull him asleep, or countenance his erroneous sentiments, would be a *better* word; for every man, and every thing loves that which is agreeable to their own nature, and hates that which is

contrary thereunto. From this it would appear, that it is of importance to have a good clerk to lead the worship.

I have spent some time in examining Dr. Watts' psalms and other human compositions, and endeavored to point out some things in them that unfit them for an offering unto God, with hope of acceptance; but I might have saved myself the trouble, had it not been that I wished to shew others, that human composition was *wholly unclean* from its nature. Every beast that was designed to be sacrificed as an offering unto God, had to be examined to see if there was any blemish in it before it was offered; but those beasts, such as dogs and swine, were not to undergo any examination, because every thing of the kind was forbidden. So human composition, like dogs and swine, needs no examination, as to whether it has any blemish in it or not, for it and all such are *utterly unclean*, in God's account, when presented in the room and place of Divine Songs. He that offereth such sacrifices "is as if he cut off a dog's neck."

If erroneous sentiments should render a man's work unpopular, I think that Dr. Watts' productions should not be so popular as they are. He says in a letter to Dr. Coleman—"I think I have said every thing concerning the Son of God which Scripture says; but I *could not* go so far as to say with some orthodox divines, that the Son is equal with the Father." Dr. Watts ought to have told us, in what, and how much, the Son is below the Father. In the year 1725 Dr. Watts came out openly against the doctrine of the Trinity. No wonder that he disregarded the *doctrine* of God's word, when he disregarded the *word itself* so much, that he could dispose of it as he thought proper. The amount of his Preface to his Psalms, and what he actually did, is *this*, that he thought *himself* capable of making a *better* Psalmody for the Church, than *God himself* had done.



A sentiment has been circulated through our country in order to strengthen the Hymning system, that it has been the practice of the Church in her purest times, to have other Psalms and Hymns than the Psalms of David made use of in public worship, and that to confine ourselves to the Psalms of David alone is an innovation.\* To prove this, the Rev. Ralph Erskine is brought forward, what

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\*See the *Appendix* to Ruffner's *Strictures*, written by Rev. John M. Wilson, of Cabarrus, N. C. An able answer to these *Strictures* has been written by M'Master.

he did and said, and what the Associate Synod wanted him to do, which are mentioned in the 10th vol. of R. Erskine's Works. Now let us see how far this proof goes to prove the Hymning System, as now practised, to be right. To lead us into the true knowledge of these things, I will take some dates of transactions from an historical account of the rise and progress of the Secession by Mr. John Brown, the Preface to the 1st vol. of Erskine's Works, and the several Prefaces in the 10th vol. which I have all before me. I shall not quote the page in these authors.

Ralph Erskine was licenced to preach in the year	- -	1709
He was ordained in Dunfermline in	- - - - -	1711
He wrote the Sonnetts in his youth, say	- - - - -	1720
The Secession commenced in	- - - - -	1732
He joined the Secession in	- - - - -	1736
His Paraphrase of Solomon's Song was published	-	1738
The Associate Synod formed in	- - - - -	1745
His Version of the Lamentations was put forth in	-	1750
His Version of Solomon's Song, his paraphrase of the first Gospel Promise, the Gospel Mystery, the ten Plagues of Egypt, and the ten Commandments, in	- - - - -	1752

Job's Hymns were written by Ralph Erskine some time before his death. His Scripture Songs were revised and prepared from his Short Notes by his son Henry Erskine, after his father's death.

Having made these dates, I shall reject those things in the writings of R. Erskine, which were done before he joined the Secession, as bound to answer for them. Then the Sonnets are set aside; also the Paraphrase of the Song of Solomon, for although it was published after, yet it was written before he joined the Secession. Also I reject that Piece that stands as a Preface to the second Book of Scripture Songs, p. 625, as it was neither written by Ralph nor Henry E. Who put it in, or when, I know not. It is signed S. In this preface it is set forth as that some of the Psalms of David were particularly adapted to the O. Testament Dispensation of carnal rites and ceremonies; on this account not so clear and full of grace and the spirit of the gospel; the consideration whereof hath induced many piously disposed persons ardently to wish that our Psalmody were enlarged, by adding other Scripture Songs out of the Old and New Testament, &c. &c.

The advocates for Hymns must prove the signature of S. to be R. Erskine's before I will admit it as proof on their side. There are three prefaces all signed S. which must share the same fate of being rejected as the composition of R. Erskine. When he had prepared Job's Hymns for the press, he told his wife, that he had done all he ever intended to do with poetry. What Henry Erskine

did in preparing R. Erskine's Scripture Songs and others, and publishing them, was his own choice, and not at the request of the Associate Synod.

Let us look at the Preface which now stands in front of Erskine's Scripture Songs; though it was placed by him as a Preface to the Lamentations of Jeremiah. The proof for the Hymns from this is, that the work of turning all the rest of the *Scripture Songs* into metre, as the Psalms of David are, and for the same public use, was proposed by the Church of Scotland more than an hundred years ago, &c. and that a similar recommendation was made to R. Erskine by the Associate Synod. And what does Erskine say about this work proposed a hundred years ago? It has never been accomplished yet. And what became of the recommendation of the Associate Synod to him? Why, it shared the same fate. And what was the reason? Why, the Associate Synod did not see it expedient to use it. Erskine was appointed only to verify the *Scripture Songs*, and what he did in this way was well done, as he kept close to the text. He was not appointed to make *Scripture Songs of his own*, or hymns, or paraphrases; but in these his sentiments are evangelical; and for this cause the corrupt branches of the church will not use them. They will not answer the Devil's purpose, and therefore he does not excite people to use them; and so they remain for private use only, where they should be. Even if all the *Scripture Songs* had been used in public worship in the Church, would that be any proof or reason, that we should use human composition, called Scripture Songs, made on Scripture subjects? Surely not. For there is as much difference between Human and Divine Songs, as there is between the chaff and the wheat. Because we make use of wheat for bread, is this a reason that we should make use of chaff too?

Now to give the full weight of the whole of Erskine's Preface, it amounts to nothing but this,—that it was the sentiment of a number in the Scottish Church, that the *other Scripture Songs* might be used as well as the Psalms of David. But as this was never put into practice, it is no *innovation* in us to use the Psalms of David only. It is evident that the Associate Church cared nothing about it, when they never examined into the matter afterwards; whether it was prepared, or whether it was good or bad. If a man engages a piece of furniture with a workman, and he never more seeks after it, you will take it for granted that he does not want it, or that he was not in earnest when he spoke for it. It must have been so with the Church of Scotland, and the Associate Church, about their enlargement of Psalmody. But, suppose that both of them had accomplished what they attempted, and sung these Scripture Songs in public worship, this would not prove it to be lawful or expedient. Even if it were lawful, it might not be expedient. "All things

are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient"—(or profitable as in the margin.) It is the command of God that makes it lawful, and it is necessity that makes it expedient. If we were to add the whole of Erskine's Poetry to the Psalms of David, it would make it so large that the mass of worshippers would have new and strange things brought to them every day, and therefore would not be so much edified as they would be by having fewer, and those that they are acquainted and familiar with; for the command is to "sing with understanding." This is one reason why we should be contented with the book of Psalms. If some could receive more, others could not. God appears to have given a sufficient number for the common mass of the people to understand, and make a good improvement of; and it would be counted useless in all cases for any one to take more in hand, than he understood, or could make a good use of. It would be bad policy where people had to act in an united capacity, to make that a *rule*, which would *only suit* the greatest and strongest in the whole number; or the least and weakest either. But if some *accommodations* are to be made to the weak, as you see it ought to be from 1 Cor. ix. 22—"To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak"—then why not in the case of Psalmody as well as any other thing?

Those who call Ralph Erskine the father and founder of the Secession, are not well skilled in the history of the rise of the Secession, or they mistake Ralph for Ebenezer Erskine; for Ralph did not join the Secession until the year 1736. The Associate Presbytery had been 4 years formed, and they had published a Testimony, and appointed Mr. Wilson to educate young men for the ministry, before Ralph joined the Secession; and therefore could not be either the father or founder of the Secession. It is very evident that R. Erskine did not go according to the request of the Associate Synod in all his performances, for it was a *version* they wanted, and not a *paraphrase*, (as the words are now used and understood, though then promiscuously used.) For a proof of this, see the Preface to Job's Hymns. In p. 454 he says, "I have not translated this Book in a Historical, but rather some parts of it in a doctrinal way." Again, "I did not see how a strict translation of this book, in a historical way, would answer the end of Psalmography; and therefore, that I might extract from it a number of songs, I have thought fit to pick out the places of this book, that appeared to me the most doctrinal," &c. Now who directed Erskine *to pick out the places that he thought fit for use*, and pass by others to make a Psalmody for the Church? If we were to take it for granted that the Book of Job is a part of the Scripture Songs, and that it is lawful to use them, when versified, in the worship of God, then who gave Erskine his authority? When Erskine, or Watts, or any



man, or any set of men, begins this sort of work, I am done with them on that point. And indeed I think the Secession Church did well to take no farther notice of it; and perhaps Erskine himself did not expect it would meet with general approbation, when he did not publish it before his death. It is a matter of amusement to me to hear men advocating and pleading for a gospel psalmody in New Testament language; and to enlarge this will select the writings of Jeremiah, Solomon, and particularly the writings of Job, one of the oldest books in the world, and the manners and customs referred to, are those of the Eastern parts of Arabia, which we have very little knowledge of. These very persons reject the writings of David as too old. But any thing that will supplant the Psalms of David will be entitled to the name of Gospel Psalmody, no matter if it was something that Cain did in the land of Nod.

Notwithstanding the high encomiums passed on Ralph Erskine for his sentiments on Psalmody, if we should turn to the subject of the falling-down work that took place in his time, and his sentiments on that work, those who at first praised him; would now call him—*Old Bigoted Seceder*. There are no men in America that are greater enemies to the Seceders, than the Hymners. And they will be so, as long as there is such a difference and opposition in their matter of praise.

Although there is a likeness between some of Erskine's Poetry and some of Watts', when they were writing on the same subject, yet there was a very great difference in their design or intention. Dr. Watts' intention was to supplant the Psalms of David with his Poetry. Erskine's design in those places referred to, was not even to be used along with the Psalms of David, much less to be used in their place; for it was only the Scripture Songs, that were versified strictly, that were intended by him to be used along with the Psalms of David. This will appear plain from his having made a paraphrase on the Song of Solomon, before the Synod recommended him to make a Version, with which he complied. In a version, if it is done, as it ought to be, there can be no error in sentiment conveyed; but in a paraphrase you may explain Scripture any way you please. Here lies the danger of admitting a paraphrase of our Songs of praise. Altho' I acknowledge that Mr. Wilson's quotation from Erskine's 10th vol. has his signature to it, yet the songs that immediately follow could not be designed to meet the recommendation of Synod; for the third song is on the 10 plagues of Egypt—a *historical* part of Scripture. Besides, that song of Erskine's contains only 5 verses, and yet it is the sum of 5 chapters; and so cannot be either a version or a paraphrase.

As Erskine's Works were not entered in *Stationer's Hall*, to prevent them from being altered, or any thing inserted in them by another, and no penalty was incurred for so doing in that case, no

doubt but some person has put in these three Prefaces signed S. in order to answer some private end ; probably to make it sell among a certain class of people. Surely Erskine would not write a Preface and put a fictitious signature to it, when he has set his name in full to others. These three Prefaces have nothing in themselves to shew that they were Erskine's, as the word *I* cannot be found in them any where. Perhaps *some* may have supposed that these Prefaces were the work of Ralph Erskine ; but I am at a loss to know how Mr. Wilson, who is a scholar, and was examining every corner of Ralph Erskine's 10th vol. could make such a mistake. Mr. Wilson must blame himself for making this mistake, and not blame me for showing it to him and the public. And as I am writing to young people who are fond of anecdotes, I shall give them one. About 40 years ago, it was common here for the Indians when they were out a hunting, and killed a deer near to any white man's house, that they would sell the venison to the white man. One day, an Indian came to a house, and told the white man that he had killed a buck near his house, and wanted him to buy it. The man agreed, and paid the Indian for it. He asked the Indian how he would find it. The Indian said that he had cut down bushes, and blazed saplings all the way to the buck. The Indian went away, and the man went in search for his buck, but never found him. Some time after, the white man met the Indian, and said to the Indian, "You cheated me, and told me lies ; there was no buck there." "Why," said the Indian, "Did you not find the bushes cut down ? And is not that *truth*?" "Yes," said the white man. "And did you not find the saplings blazed ? And is not that *truth*?" "Yes," replied the other. "Well," said the Indian, "there is *two truths*, and but *one lie*, and that will do *very well* for *poor Indian*." So Mr. Wilson has made *two fair quotations* from Ralph Erskine's writings, and *one not so* ; and that will do *very well* for one that is *vindicating human composition in the worship of God*.

The *page* I found, of these extractings,  
 As clear and plain, as blazed saplings ;  
 The *words* I found, without much hunting,  
 But ERSKINE'S NAME, (the BUCK,) was wanting !

Few, that have gone before Mr. Wilson, have done as much as he has. And, even in his fair quotation, there is a wrong application of it ; for an addition of *the other Scripture Songs*, was never designed to countenance human composition, and human invention in the worship of God.

No doubt many may believe what Mr. Wilson has said, that a large and very respectable portion of the Associate Reformed Church have united with the General Assembly Church. To know how true this is, we will glance at the proceedings of the Associate Re-

formed Church, consisting of four Synods, and Nine Presbyteries, with a flourishing Seminary and funds, all under one General Synod, and all going on well, until one or two of her leading men joined with the G. Assembly in singing Human composition in the worship of God, contrary to our Standards; which, together with some other misconduct, gave such offence, that the Synod of the West withdrew, with almost half of the Ministers belonging to the G. Synod, after them. The Synod of the South withdrew by consent. At the same time, a plan of union with the G. Assembly was under consideration, and referred to the remaining 5 Presbyteries for their decision. A majority of the Presbyteries decided against the Union. There were seven Ministers only that voted when the Synod took the vote on it, and it was carried by one vote only; and every one that voted for it was in the Presbytery of Philadelphia, except one. Thus *four* were found to vote for it; and there could not be found four more out of the *sixty* belonging to the Associate Reformed Church to vote for it. Two only went there and took their seats in the G. Assembly; and one they have turned out of their communion since. Very few of the Congregations went with those pastors who voted for it. And since that time several ministers who had been in the habit of using Watts' Psalms and Hymns have joined the Synod of New-York. These statements, taken mostly from the Minutes of our Church, and the Evangelical Witness, will shew that there was *not* a large and very respectable portion of the Associate Reformed Church that joined the G. Assembly. Our Church is stronger this day than it ever was in America. In 1822 there was a Secession of 11 Ministers and 13 Congregations from the *Reformed Dutch Church* in America, which Secession stands on the same ground as we do, condemning human compositions in the worship of God, holding up Watts as an Arian, and approving only of the Scripture Songs. This body of Seceders declare that the 69th Article of the Dutch Church allows only the 150 Psalms of David and a few other Scripture Songs to be sung. If the Dutch Church had not made *innovations*, there would now have been 100 Ministers and 150 Congregations on our "side of the question." Besides many Ministers of the G. Assembly sing Rouse's Version, some principally, and some altogether. And when we consider the Ministers of the *Associate Church*, and the *Reformed Church* in this country, and the hundreds of Seceder Ministers in Scotland and Ireland, we may rejoice in the strength of our cause, which is indeed the cause of the King and Head of Zion.

The proper season is come now  
To drop the pen and take the Plough.

JAMES HARRIS.