



TALKS ON PSALMODY

IN THE

MATHEWS FAMILY.

BY

REV. W. D. RALSTON.

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# TALKS ON PSALMODY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION.

Teaching school—The Mathews Family—Sabbath-evenings—A visit—A discussion—More information promised—Taking notes—What became of the notes.

WHILE a student, I taught several terms of public school in country districts. On the last day of October, 18—, I left my father's house to take charge of a school some twenty miles distant. The family with whom I was to board were entire strangers. My parents were members of the Associate Presbyterian church, or the Seceder church, as it was mostly called, while the family

with whom I was to board belonged to the Associate Reformed Presbyterian church. In the year 1858, these two bodies were united, and formed the United Presbyterian church.

The winter I spent with that family, was a pleasant and profitable one; and as I shall write of the persons composing the family, I will here describe them. The father, and mother, John, and Mary Mathews, were Americans by birth, and had received a good common education. The wife, before marriage, had taught school for several years. John Mathews had a remarkable memory. He seemed to remember all he read. He was not a great talker, but preferred to read, or listen to others; still when led into conversation, it was a pleasure to listen to him. He had a happy way of illustrating what he said, which was pleasing to

the young. He would tell many stories and anecdotes to illustrate, and enforce what he said.

They had three children,—John thirteen, Mary twelve, and Willie nine. For their age, the children were well informed, both in regard to religious truths, and general knowledge. When I saw how perseveringly the parents labored for their improvement, I felt they could not be otherwise.

They seldom had preaching on Sabbath-night in their church, and therefore they devoted the entire evening to the study of the Scriptures at home. Their evening work was attended to early, and as soon as the candles were lighted, their study of the Scriptures commenced. The teacher was the mother, not because she excelled her husband in knowledge, but because her teaching school had better

prepared her for imparting instruction.

The first exercise was the Catechism, which all knew; but still, half of it was asked each Sabbath-evening, to keep it fresh in their memories. After that, they took up some subject previously selected. The first Sabbath-evening I was there, the subject was Zaccheus the publican; on the second, it was the destruction of Jerico. Mr. Mathews sat listening, occasionally adding a word or two, and at the close related one or more interesting stories bearing upon the subject for the evening, and then the exercises were closed with the usual evening worship.

#### THE VISIT.

The people in that community often made social visits in the evening. One evening as I dismissed school, Mr. and

Mrs. Mathews drove up to the door of the school-house, and said they were going to visit a friend by the name of Stillman, who lived some two miles distant, and wished me and the children to accompany them. We did so, and enjoyed the visit very much. While there, an incident occurred which I wish to relate. Mr. Stillman was a member of the Methodist church, and one of those persons always ready for an argument. During the evening he tried several times to draw Mr. Mathews into an argument; but the latter, not wishing to turn a social chat into a controversy, did not reply to his remarks. At last psalmody came up, and Mr. Stillman spoke very lightly of the Psalms, declaring that the hymns of his own church were far superior, and preferable to the Psalms, and expressed surprise that people so intelli-

gent, should use such songs in the worship of God. This language aroused Mr. Mathews, who replied sharply, and soon the two were in earnest controversy. The women and children were in the kitchen, and I was the only listener to the discussion. I was surprised at Mr. Mathews' knowledge on this question, and saw that he had given much study to the subject. His arguments had power, while what Mr. Stillman said, was scattered by him like chaff.

In the heat of the debate the women entered, and on the entreaty of Mrs. Stillman, the debate was stopped, and the conversation turned upon matters on which they could talk more calmly.

As we rode home, Mr. Mathews and I talked of the discussion, and I told him I had felt much interested in it, and would have liked to have heard more, as

there were difficulties in my mind upon this very matter. I also asked him if he would not have a talk with me some evening on this subject. He then told me that he and his wife had been intending for some time to spend a few Sabbath evenings talking with their children on the psalmody question, showing them why we used only psalms in praising God, and that now, as I had spoken of it, they would do so while I was with them. A few Sabbaths after this, Mr. Mathews announced to us that on the next Sabbath-evening our subject would be, Why we use only the Psalms of Scripture in the worship of God?

## NOTES.

It was my custom to carry in my pocket a small note-book, in which I no-

ted down any new thoughts, or any thing I had heard or read, which I especially wished to remember. Several times on Sabbath-evenings I had taken out my note-book and noted down some new thought advanced. Mr. Mathews had seen me do this, and one evening he proposed to me, as I was manifesting much eagerness to hear this psalmody question discussed, that I should make as full notes of our conversations as I could, and I would be more likely to remember the arguments advanced.

I did so, and then the children and I conceived the idea of writing out the conversations in the form of a book, and therefore during the week we wrote out the conversations of the previous Sabbath; so that with my notes, and the aid I received from the children, and also the parents, I feel that the conversations

were written down very correctly—almost word for word as they occurred. In this work we all became very much interested. When our talks were ended, the manuscript was quite a book. I desired to keep it; so did the children, and also the parents, as I could see. They talked of buying it from me, but remembering their kindness to me, I presented them the manuscript.

Since that over twenty years have passed, and great changes have taken place. The Mathews family are all living. The father and mother are growing old and gray; the children are married. Mary and her husband live with her parents in the old home, while the two sons live near. They are a blessing to their parents, and useful members of the community, and of the church. I still receive

letters from Mr. Mathews, and one has just been received in which he says, "You remember your manuscript containing our conversations on the use of Psalms in the worship of God. Word got out that we had such a book, and we were asked again and again to lend it. For years it has been passing from family to family, until now it is almost worn out. Many who have read it, have represented to me that our church needs such a book to put into the hands of Sabbath-school children, that they might early become acquainted with our views on the subject of psalmody, and have urged me to publish these conversations. I feel that my work on earth is nearly done. If I could leave any thing behind me that would still work for God and his church, I would be rejoiced. I therefore send the manuscript to you, and submit its

publication entirely to you. If you think it will do any good, publish it, and do it in whatever form you think best."

Such is a brief history of these conversations, which we ask you to read over carefully. You will find the subject discussed in a plain simple manner; and for more information read, *The True Psalmody*, PRESSLY on *Psalmody*, or some work of that kind, of which there are a number now in print.



## CHAPTER II.

### *FIRST EVENING.*

#### MEANING OF PSALMS AND HYMNS.

Different songs used in praising God—Meaning of Psalms—Author of Psalms—The prose version—The metrical version—Meaning of Hymns—Our version inspired—A story; The wood-choppers.

SABBATH-evening found us all in our places, eager to hear something upon this new subject. The room was pleasant and cozy. Mr. Mathews sat on one side of a bright coal-fire, and Mrs. Mathews on the other. Mary sat beside her mother, while the two boys and I sat by the table which held the lights, and which was placed near the center of

the room. Before me was my paper for notes, and in the hands of the children were their Bibles.

The exercises were conducted by Mrs. Mathews in the same manner as the customary exercises on Sabbath evenings. The usual portion of the Catechism was heard; she then said, "You all know that in worshiping God we use psalms, while the Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans and others around us, use hymns. I shall try to teach you why we use nothing but Psalms. And while I talk on the subject, I hope you will ask questions, and ask me to explain farther any part you may not fully understand.

We shall first seek to understand what is meant by psalms and hymns. You all know that among the books of the Bible, there is one called the book of Psalms. I want you to turn to it. You

see it is called the “Book of Psalms.” The word ‘psalm’ means a sacred song, and the book of psalms means the book of sacred songs.

The Jews had singing in connection with their worship, and David and other inspired men wrote these songs for their use. The psalms were not all written by David, but he wrote the most of them. The others were written from time to time by other men who were inspired of God for that purpose; and all were collected into this book, which was referred to by Christ and his apostles as the book of Psalms. David, who wrote most of the psalms, was commissioned by God for this work. See 2 Sam. xxiii. 1.—“Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the *sweet psal-*

*mist of Israel* said." You will find that no other prophet had this title, "The sweet psalmist of Israel," showing that to David was given this work. He was commissioned by God to prepare him a book of praise.

*Mary.* But mother, we do not sing these psalms, it is the psalms at the back of our Bibles that we sing, and not those in the middle.

*Mrs. M.* That is true, and still we sing these same psalms; but as they are here, they are not arranged so as to be sung according to the tunes we have learned. There is a way to sing them called chanting. You remember at our singing-school last winter, the teacher and a few of the best singers sometimes sang a chant. Chanting does very well if the people only knew how to chant, but it is not common, like singing. We

want the whole congregation to sing; to do so we must sing the music the people understand. Therefore we have the psalms in meter.

Those who wrote the psalms, and also those for whom they were written, spake the Hebrew language; therefore the psalms were written in Hebrew, and we believe they were so written as to be easily sung by those who spake that language. We cannot read Hebrew, and therefore we have them translated. That is, men that were learned in both the Hebrew and English, translated, or wrote out the book of psalms in English. To-day, we who do not know the Hebrew language can read them in our own language.

The book of Psalms in your Bibles to which you have turned is called the prose version, because it is a translation of the

Psalms into prose. If some learned men could make a translation of the Psalms into prose, others could translate them into poetry. The one translation gives us the Hebrew songs in English prose, and the other gives us the same songs in English poetry. The poetical version tells us the same truths as the prose, only it may be necessary to use a few more words to fill up the measure, and make the lines a proper length. This will be best seen by taking your Bibles and examining a few psalms, and comparing the prose version with the poetical. (A half hour was then spent comparing several psalms, and talking over the different words used, and all could see that both versions expressed the same truths.)

*Willie.* What does the word hymn mean?

*Mrs. M.* It means a sacred song. It

is a word meaning the same as psalm, or at least I know of no difference between the words; but as we use these words to-day, they mean very different things. In common conversation the word psalm is applied to those sacred songs found in the book of psalms, and to metrical versions of them; while the word hymn is applied to those devotional songs composed by men, and which are now used by most churches in God's worship. Some hymns are composed principally of scripture, and are merely portions of scripture rendered into poetry. Other hymns are built upon some passage or verse; they have some passage or verse of scripture for their motto. Others are merely the devotional thoughts of the writers, arranged in poetry; and not a few have been written for some purpose aside from religion, and have been chang-

ed and altered so as to have a religious form. Psalms are inspired. They were written by inspired men, and the aim of the translators, both of the prose and the poetical version, was to give the original fully, and as nearly in the same form as the original as possible. It is not claimed that hymns are inspired; and I wish you to remember that the psalms, even in our metrical version are inspired.

*Mary.* Were the men who put the psalms in meter inspired?

*Mrs. M.* No: neither were the men that translated them into prose. The Hebrew was written by inspired men; and any faithful translation of it, whether in prose or poetry, may be called inspired. We must now stop for this evening.

#### MR. MATHEWS' STORY.

TO-NIGHT I will tell you an incident

that occurred to me many years ago. I was about nineteen, when I spent a part of one winter cutting cord-wood to make charcoal for an iron furnace. We worked by a little creek, on the banks of which stood our cabin. Our cabin was small, only about eight by twelve feet in size, covered with boards. Almost the whole of one end was a fire-place. During the winter evenings, as we had plenty of wood, we kept up a roaring fire, making our cabin very light and cheerful. We bought our bread from the wife of a neighboring farmer, and kept on hand a stock of wholesome provisions, for which our work of chopping gave us excellent appetites.

My partner, named James M'Cormick, was four years older than I, a pleasant companion, and an excellent singer. He led the singing in the church he attend-

ed, and he had with him a hymn-book with the hymns set to tunes. At his suggestion, I procured one of the same, and many of our evenings were spent in singing, and often through the day we made the woods ring with our songs. The wood-choppers called us the *musical boys*, and named our little cabin the church, as they heard so much singing there. During that winter I learned much about singing that has been a comfort to me, and has made me able to lead our own congregation in singing God's praises. I look back to that winter, feeling that it was a happy period. I was earning money to help my father and mother; had a good companion, good food, and as we worked steadily, the time passed away quickly. We also kept a gun with us and often shot a squirrel, a rabbit, or a quail, which gave variety to our food;

and our evenings were pleasantly spent in reading, singing, or telling stories, by our huge log-fire. When our work was done, it was with feelings of regret that I left the little cabin, bade my friend James farewell, and set out for home.

As I trudged homeward, I stopped at an uncle's, and spent the night there. In the evening I got out my hymn-book, and had some singing with my cousins. After I laid it down, my uncle took it up, got his glasses, and spent some time looking through it. He was a firm believer in the exclusive use of the Psalms, and my book was the hymn-book of another denomination. It gave the hymns, and the music, with the names of the composers of each as far as known. Uncle read a hymn, and naming the author said, I know nothing of him. He read another and said, I have read about the author

of this one; he was a Roman Catholic priest. He read another and said, I have often read of this author; he was a good man, and an earnest Christian minister. He then said, Now John, if I were going to use one of these hymns in the worship of God to-night, which do you think I had best choose, the one about whose author I know nothing, the one by the Roman Catholic priest, or the one by the earnest Christian minister? I replied, the one by the minister. True, said he, we should select the one written by the best man, and I see by looking through your book, that it contains many hymns written by good men, but if I should find in it one composed by God himself, would it not be better to sing that, than one composed by any good man? I replied, it surely would. After a little he said, I have now looked carefully through your book,

and I do not find one hymn in it, that is marked, "*composed by God*," but I have here a little hymn-book, and God by his holy Spirit has composed every hymn in it; for Peter says, "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the holy Ghost." As he spoke, he handed me one of our psalm-books. And the manner in which he presented his argument made an impression upon my mind that I never forgot.

Children, is not the fact that God is the author of these psalms, a sufficient reason why we should use them in preference to hymns composed by mere men? If we cast aside the psalms composed by God himself, and take in their room hymns composed by mere men, do we not show contempt for the Maker of the psalms, and say that man's work is better than his? for surely we would use

what we thought the best. Let us now close our evening's talk by singing to God's praise one of his own songs.

My feet from each ill way I stay'd,  
That I might keep thy word.  
I from thy judgments have not swerv'd;  
For thou hast taught me, Lord.

How sweet unto my taste, O Lord,  
Are all thy words of truth!  
Yea, I do find them sweeter far  
Than honey to my mouth.

I through thy precepts, that are pure,  
Do understanding get;  
I therefore ev'ry way that's false  
With all my heart do hate.

—*Psalm. cxix. 101-104.*

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## CHAPTER III.

### *SECOND EVENING.*

#### PSALMS APPOINTED BY GOD.

God directs us how to worship him—Pharaoh—Law of Moses—Cain and Abel—God's law perfect and complete—Corn and oats—Second Commandment—Story about old Auntie.

**M**RS. M. God has commanded us to worship him; and he has the right to say in what way we are to worship him; and if we worship not in accordance with those directions, we have no reason to think that our worship will be acceptable to him.

*John.* But are we sure, mother, that God has given these directions?

*Mrs. M.* I am very sure that he has; you will find them in his word; and when we search that word for those directions, you find that we are told to sing in our worship. If we are to sing, we must have something to sing, and we would expect God, either to provide songs to be used in his praise, or direct us to make songs, and use them.

You remember how Pharoah the king of Egypt was called a cruel tyrant because he so oppressed Israel. He required of them a full tale of bricks, but refused to provide straw. Our God is not a tyrant. He does not tell us to praise him, and provide no songs to be used in his praise. He has furnished us with a book of psalms, or songs, and we find no command, or the least hint about our making or using any other. Ought we not then to use these songs he has fur-

nished us? If we do not worship him as he has directed, we have no reason to suppose that he will accept our worship

*Mary.* Is God so very particular about his worship?

*Mrs. M.* Yes: God is very particular about his worship. You remember last winter we spent many of our sabbath-evenings studying passages in the law of Moses, and you were all much surprised to find God giving such minute directions about the services of that dispensation. So God in his word has laid down plain directions for his worship, even under our present dispensation; and he requires us to worship him in the way he has directed. Cain was a tiller of the ground, and Abel was a keeper of sheep, and when they came with their offerings to God's alter, Cain brought of the fruit of the ground, but Abel brought of the firstlings

of his flock, and the fat thereof. Abel's offering was accepted, but Cain's was not. When we consider their occupations, it seems very natural that they should bring such offerings; and why should Cain's be rejected, unless God had directed them what to offer in sacrifice, and Cain did not follow the directions. I believe that such was the case, and therefore it becomes us in our worship to follow closely the directions God has given. When we are commanded to sing psalms in his worship, and he has provided the psalms, and placed them in our hands, we certainly ought to obey him if we want our worship to be acceptable to him.

*John.* I would like to ask if God is as particular about his worship in our time as in former times; I know he was very particular with the Israelites, but is he as

particular in regard to the way *we* worship him?

MRS. M. Why should he not be as particular? The Bible tells us that he is always the same. "He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." His word gives directions for his church in all ages. It is a perfect law. In Ps. xix. 7, we read,—"The law of the Lord is perfect." There is nothing wanting in it. It is a perfect rule of direction for his church in every age. Nothing is to be added to it, or taken from it. Take your Bibles and look at Rev. xxii. 18, 19; "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take

away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." You see then, that God's law is perfect; nothing is to be added to it, and nothing taken from it. And I must say, it has always appeared to me, when uninspired songs are used in God's worship, that those using them say of God's law, It is not perfect; we must have more than is found in his word, to enable us to worship him aright. And so they virtually take from his word the psalms he has given us to sing in his worship, and add to his word the hymns they do sing.

MARY. If that is so, then hymn-singing churches make themselves liable to both those fearful denunciations we have read from Revelation; for they both take from, and add to God's word.

MRS. M. We can justly arrive at that

conclusion, but let us not judge them too harshly. In some future talk we shall show reasons why we should judge them mildly; but their actions certainly have that appearance, and it becomes all, and especially all churches to abstain, not only from evil, but from all appearance of evil.

God tells us to sing in his worship, to sing psalms, and gives us no hint that we may use anything else. In no place has he recalled this command, and therefore it is binding upon us to-day. He has given us a book of psalms to be sung in his praise. David alone was honored with the title "The sweet Psalmist of Israel," and surely we do wrong to disobey him. When he has commanded us to sing the songs contained in his "*perfect law*," and we use in their place songs not found there, do we not disobey him?

Suppose I give a command to Willie to feed our chickens with corn morning and evening, he for a time obeys me, and feeds corn; but after a little he hears some one say oats are better, and without any command from me quits using corn, and uses oats. My command was to use corn, but of his own will he uses oats; now do you think he obeyed me?

So God commands us to sing psalms, and has furnished us the psalms, but many do not use psalms. They lay them aside and use hymns, and do you think they obey God? What does God forbid in the second commandment?

*Mary.* "The second commandment forbiddeth the worshiping of God by images, or any other way not appointed in his word."

*Mrs. M.* That plainly shows us that

although we have no images in our churches, we may still be guilty of breaking the second commandment, and we do so whenever in the worship of God, we leave the directions he has given us, and worship in our own way. When we attempt to worship God, let us ask for the way in which he has commanded this worship to be performed, and follow the directions given as closely as we can.

## MR. MATHEWS' STORY.

As Mrs. Mathews closed, we all looked to Mr. Mathews expecting a story, and Willie, moving his chair close to his father's side, leaned over upon his knee, and the father, placing his arm around his son, related the following story:

The truth that God knows what would

be best to use in his praise, was once forcibly presented to my mind, by the words of an old Scotch lady, who lived about two miles from my father's house. She was about seventy years old, had never been married, and lived in a little log house, down in a deep hollow. The little stream passing through the hollow was known as Coal-bank Run, being so named from the coal-banks on it, not far from her house. The valley in which her house stood was very narrow, and closely shut in by high hills. In speaking of her lonely cottage home, she sometimes said it stood at the foot of Mount Pisgah, and therefore her friends called her place Pisgah. Certainly any land one could view from it, must have been the heavenly Canaan, as any earthly view was shut out by the high hills; you could look only one way, and that was upward.

Here in this lonely valley lived this aged servant of God, and an old dog called Cuff, that once belonged to a neighbor, attracted by her kindness, lived with her and was her only companion.

One day I was working, repairing the coal-bank, when a thunder-shower came up. I could have found shelter in the mouth of the bank, but chose to walk down to her cottage, thinking the time would pass more pleasantly chatting with my aged friend. The heavens were black with clouds, and the lightning and thunder indicated a heavy rain.

As I paused upon the door-step I heard the voice of singing, and listening I knew the words to be those of Psalm xxix, which so beautifully describe God in the storm and tempest.

“The Lord’s voice on the waters is ;  
The God of majesty

Doth thunder, and on multitudes  
    Of waters sitteth he.  
A powerful voice it is that comes  
    Out from the Lord most high;  
The voice of that great God is full  
    Of glorious majesty."

She had not noticed my approach, so I said, Auntie, I see you can sing in the midst of the thunder. She arose, and looking at me through her glasses replied: "Why! John, is that you? Come awa' an' tak' a seat; man but I'm glad to see ye. Aye, I was jist lilting a wee bit o' a psalm. It's a great comfort to a lonely bodie like me at sich a time, when God's voice is heard in the thuner." Here she was interrupted by a deafening peal of thunder, she paused, and raising her trembling hand, and pointing upward said, using the same psalm:

"The voice of the Eternal doth  
    Asunder cedars tear."

There is naething sae comforting to me in this barren place, laddie, as thae psalms of the Bible. What a great comfort to one, an' O how cheering in storm or tempest, is the 46th psalm:

“God is our refuge, and our strength,  
In straits a present aid;  
Therefore, although the earth remove,  
We will not be afraid.”

Man, what a comfort it is to ken that they are God's ain songs. Their words are His ain words; I hae a pleasure in singen them which I ken I wouldna hae in singen ony other.”

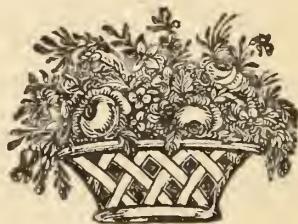
But, auntie, says I, all cannot see this as you do. Many now prefer the songs of uninspired men, to the psalms of scripture.

“I ken that, lad, but I canna understand it. That ony o' God's children would turn awa' from God's songs, and

tak' in their place the songs of ony o' his craters! Why, man, what is it to give God praise? Is it no' to tell o' his greatness—o' his mighty acts—o' his glorious attributes, rehearse his promises, and mingle our prayers wi' them. Noo dinna the psalms dae a' this, an' couldna God dae better than men? Aye canna' the God we praise gae us better matter to use in his praise than men could devise? Its strange, Johnnie, that ony o' God's folks wud lay aside his psalms, an' tak' the songs of men. Is na' his holy Spirit greater than man, an' are na' his words better than man's words?"

We talked for an hour, and the storm having passed, I returned to my work; but I often thought of her words, and the more I have thought of them, the more forcible has her argument appeared. God's holy Spirit surely knew bet-

ter what matter to use in the praise of God, than any man, or body of men. Her talk strengthened my faith in the use of the psalms as matter of praise, and I feel if men would only remember that God is the author of the psalms, they would be content with them, and ask for no others.



## CHAPTER IV.

### *THIRD EVENING.*

#### USE OF THE PSALMS IN THE PAST.

A review—A prayer of Moses—Songs of degrees—Jesus sang psalms—Visiting Palestine—The prisoners at Philippi—Martyrs—Tender recollections—Story: A relic of the persecutions in Scotland.

**T**WO Sabbath evenings had passed since our last talk on psalmody. The first evening I was absent on a visit to my parents, and the second, Willie was ill, therefore our talks had been deferred. Willie was now so far recovered as to sit in an easy chair, and our talks were resumed.

*Mrs. M.* As our talks have been interrupted, let us briefly review the two former. The first evening we considered the meaning of the words psalm, and hymn, and showed that the psalms, even in our metrical version, are the inspired word of God. On the second evening we considered that the book of psalms was given by God to be used in his worship, and this evening we shall talk about the use of the psalms in the past.

When the psalms were first used, we know not, as the authors of many of them are not known. David composed most of them, but not all. It is believed that the 90th psalm was composed by Moses. Its title is, "A prayer of Moses, the man of God." Most men that try to explain these psalms, think Moses wrote this one. If so, what an ancient song!—a song that was sung by Israel, as they followed the

cloudy pillar here and there through the wilderness. As that generation wasted away, how appropriate to them the words,

“For in thine anger all our days  
Do pass on to an end;  
And as a tale that hath been told,  
So we our years do spend.”

We sing it, thinking of Moses, and of Israel during their wanderings, and that as they marched through the wilderness they sang it. As we sing others, we feel certain that they once sounded through the courts of the temple. How often, during the year, were the males of Israel to go up to Jerusalem?

*John.* Three times: at the feast of the passover, at pentecost, and at the feast of tabernacles.

*Mrs. M.* As they journeyed towards Jerusalem, they doubtless would collect in companies, and as they traveled along

would sing God's songs as Psalm cxxi:

"I to the hills will lift mine eyes,  
From whence doth come mine aid;  
My safety cometh from the Lord,  
Who heaven and earth hath made."

or Psalm cxxii:

"I joyed when to the house of God,  
Go up, they said to me;  
Jerusalem within thy gates,  
Our feet shall standing be."

You will find Psalms cxx, and cxxiv inclusive, called "songs of degrees." The word degree, will mean ascent; and it is thought by some, that they were so called because the people sang them as they went up to the temple to keep these feasts. I do not doubt but these psalms were sung as they journeyed; they were also sung in the city, as they thronged the streets, and as they crowded in the courts of the temple they made those

courts ring with their songs, as they praised the Lord, "Who is good, and whose mercy endureth for ever."

When Jesus was here upon earth he sang these Scripture psalms. We find him speaking of them as the Book of Psalms, and we read that he, in company with his disciples engaged in singing, and we are driven to the conclusion, that the songs they sung were these psalms of David, because we have not the least evidence that any other sacred songs were then in existence. We know that the psalms were then sung in God's worship, and we have no evidence whatever, that any other sacred songs were sung, or were in existence. In Matth. xxvi. 30, we read, "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives." Expositors of the Bible tell us that this hymn was a Jewish *hallel* which

is a portion of the psalms, namely, the cxiii and cxviii inclusive. I am clearly convinced that if our blessed Savior sung any songs when here on earth, they were the psalms, and surely we ought to prize them, because he sang them. If they were good enough for him, ought they not to be good enough for us?

To-day we find Christian men and women who possess the means to do so, traveling over the land of Palestine, and professing to have great pleasure in visiting the places where Jesus was, traveling the roads he traveled, and gazing upon the scenery he beheld. They go to Bethlehem where he was born, to Nazareth where he was brought up, sit down by Jacob's well where he sat, they go to Jerusalem where he suffered, and have great pleasure in doing this, because Jesus is associated with these places; and

still in his worship they neglect those psalms which Jesus sang while here. We, as a church sing these songs, and feel we do right because Jesus sang them, and Jesus did nothing wrong.

*Mary.* I remember now that a few months ago our subject for Sabbath-evening was the conversion of the Philippian jailor, Acts xvi, and you said you felt certain that the songs Paul and Silas sang in the prison were psalms.

*Mrs. M.* Yes: I remember our talk on that subject, and I have no doubt but when they prayed and sang praises to God, and the prisoners heard them, and the mighty earthquake shook the foundations of the prison, opened the doors and loosed every one's bonds, that their song was a psalm. How appropriate to them the language of Psalm cxlvi, especially this verse:

“Who righteous judgment executes  
For those oppressed that be.  
Who to the hungry giveth food;  
God sets the prisoners free.”

We have no reason to believe otherwise than that these psalms were used by Christ and his apostles, and by the early church.

We believe all the apostles suffered martyrdom, except John, and doubtless these psalms were their comfort in their sufferings; and if they sang anything in their hours of imprisonment, or on their way to execution, it was psalms. In the past, hundreds and thousands have laid down their lives for the truth, and we know that many of them went to the stake to be burned singing these songs.

Thus you see they are not only God’s own songs, but when we think of their past history, what a halo of glory clus-

ters around them! Who could write the history of this book of Psalms? We cannot take time to refer to the many martyrs consoled by them, and the many associations that cluster around them. Memory recalls to me many associations connected with them in the history of the church; but fresh and green in memory are many sacred recollections of these Bible Psalms. I look back to the time when with father, mother, brothers and sisters, I dwelt a joyous child in a happy home, evening and morning we gathered in a circle around the hearth in the old home, while these songs were sung, God's word read, and then we all knelt in prayer, led by a father who has long been offering praise before the great white throne in glory. I often think I can hear my father's coarse, rough voice, as he raised

the tune; then my mother's sweet, gentle voice joining his, followed by the children, until the old home rang with the sacred melody. I could not speak of the sacred associations which, in my memory cluster about many of these psalms. My feelings would entirely overcome me, and besides it is time for us to listen to father's story.

## MR. MATHEWS' STORY.

MY dear children, I might tell you many stories about the use of the psalms in the past; but I shall only tell you one, and I chose that because it is connected with my ancestors. My mother came from Scotland. Her family name was M'Donald. My father's family had long been in this country, although they originally came from Ireland. Through the

family of my mother, there came into my possession a relic which I prize very highly, and which I must show, for it is about it I wish to talk.

In the dark days of the persecution, a little band of God's people met for worship in a narrow valley in the mountains of Scotland. Such a meeting was contrary to the law of the land, but one higher than the king had said, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together;" and their souls longed for the privilege of uniting in praising God, and praying to him. It is only when the church is honored and respected, that there is danger from hypocrites.

This little band had engaged in singing, reading God's word and prayer, and an aged minister was preaching to them from God's word, when a shepherd rushed into the meeting, saying that a band

of soldiers was approaching up the valley. The minister closed his remarks with a brief prayer to God to protect them, and the meeting quickly scattered. They knew well the paths and by-ways, and soon the place was empty. Some enemy of these people, learning of the meeting, had told the officer about it, who had sent a band of soldiers to arrest the leaders, and scatter the meeting; but God had the care of his faithful people and preserved them. When the soldiers reached the spot, all were gone; still the ground gave evidence of a meeting having been held there. As they gazed around, and cursed and swore at those who had escaped their hands, a soldier noticed a book lying upon the top of a stone where it had been forgotten in the haste of escape. He picked it up, and looking at it, saw it was a psalm-book,

such as was used by those despised Cameronians, and with an oath he threw it from him. It fell at the feet of another soldier, who drew his sword and cut and hacked it, swearing that if he could not cut its owner, he would cut it. My mother's ancestors were at that meeting. Whether the book belonged to any of them or not, I cannot tell; but they obtained it, and it has been handed down from generation to generation, until it came into my hands, and it is now in my trunk with my valuable papers.

Mr. Mathews went to his trunk, and taking from it a small parcel, unwrapped it, and placed in our hands a psalm-book. We gazed at it with feelings of awe and veneration. The saber-cuts were plainly seen. The letters had a strange look, and many of the words were spelled strangely. We were eager to see it, and

it passed from hand to hand, and all felt that it was an interesting relic, as it pointed to the days of the martyrs, the pride of Scotland.

After we had all seen it, Mr. Mathews said:—Is it not a privilege to possess this book? It was once used by persecuted ancestors in their meetings for God's worship amid glens and mosses. It has upon it marks of the sword whetted to shed their blood. It has been held in hands long since turned to clay; these make the book dear and interesting to us all.

Let me tell you, it is a great privilege to belong to a church like ours, which uses in the worship of God these psalms of Scripture which were once used in God's holy temple on mount Zion, used by Jesus himself, and his apostles, and also by the martyrs of the early church.

If I love and prize this book when I think of its history, ought I not to prize far more these songs of Zion when I think of *their* history?

In our worship that night we sang the 91st Psalm. Willie and Mary used that old, old book; and we could not but feel that God's songs were suitable for every occasion as we sang,—

“He that doth in the secret place  
    Of the most High reside;  
Under the shade of him that is  
    The Almighty shall abide.

Thou shalt not need to be afraid  
    For terrors of the night;  
Nor for the arrow that doth fly  
    By day while it is light.”

We also felt that we could add our *Amen* to the prayer Mr. Mathews offered up that night, in which he prayed

that we might ever love God's truth, like these worthies of old, and bear witness for it.



## CHAPTER V.

### *FOURTH EVENING.*

#### THE TESTIMONY OF GOOD MEN.

Psalms not suitable now—Opinions of Martin Luther—Athanasius—Mathew Henry—Lamartine—John Calvin—Others—They do speak of Christ—Bishop Horseye—Anointed—Learn Scripture by singing them—Story—Compass—Snow-storm—Helps.

RS. M. Persons who do not use the psalms in praise, say they are not suitable to be used now. They say the psalms were intended for olden times, but now they are unsuitable;—that if we now went up to Jerusalem and offered sacrifices in God's temple, we might with propriety use the psalms; but since all this has passed away, we ought to lay aside their use.

I feel that such persons make a mistake. The psalms were intended not only for the use of the ancient church, but for the use of God's people to the end of the world; and they are suited to the wants of God's people in every age. In proof of this, I would refer you to the opinions of great and good men. Martin Luther, of whom you have heard so much says, "The psalter is a little Bible." Athanasius calls the psalms "An epitome of the whole Scriptures." Henry, who wrote the commentary says, "In the book of psalms there is so much of Christ and his gospel, as well as of God and his law, that it has been called the abstract, or summary of both Testaments." Clark, the commentator says, "I know nothing like the book of psalms. It contains all the lengths, breadths, depths, and hights of the Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian

dispensations. You see from the testimony of these men, that it would be no use for a person to collect the real doctrine and substance of the entire Bible into a little book, because the book of psalms is such a little book. Here God himself gives us the very marrow of the Scriptures. Why then not suitable for this age? Lamartine says, "David is the psalmist for eternity." Not the psalmist for one dispensation, but for all.

The book of Psalms exactly suits the heart. John Calvin says, "I have been accustomed to call the book of Psalms, (not inappropriately I think) the anatomy of the soul; for there is not an emotion of which we can be conscious, that is not represented in the psalms as in a mirror, or rather the holy Spirit has there drawn to the life, all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes and perplexities, and

in short, all the perplexing emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated."

You see from this extract that Calvin believed these psalms suited to every feeling, or emotion of the soul; that in them the soul is dissected; that as doctors cut up a human body to show its different parts, so the soul is cut up to show its different feelings. Another writer says, "Of all parts of the Bible, there is most to illustrate the human heart in the psalms. All that is in the heart of man is there in one way or another." Did time permit, I could refer you to one after another, many of them hymn-singers, who give their testimony to the beauty of the psalms, and their suitableness for worship in every age of the church.

*John.* Mother, I once heard Mr. Sloan say he could not use our psalms because

they did not speak of Christ.

*Mrs. M.* That objection is often urged against the psalms, but it is untrue. The psalms *do* speak of Christ. They are full of Christ. Let us turn to Luke xxiv. 44.—“And he said unto them, ‘These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me.’” Here we have Christ’s authority for the truth that the psalms do speak of him. Such as Mr. Sloan seem to think that Christ was not in his church until he came in the flesh; but Christ was always in his church, and the psalms he gave to his church are full of him. Bishop Horsey says, “There is not a page in the book of Psalms, in which the pious reader will not find Christ, if he reads with a view

to finding him." In Psalm ii. 2, we find his name given. Messiah, Christ, and Anointed, are the same word. Here he is spoken of as the "Anointed." "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his Anointed."

On next Sabbath-evening, I will present to you a selection of verses from the psalms in which I believe Christ is the person meant.

*Mary.* I have been looking at the second Psalm, and it seems to me to speak in that verse as though the event referred to was past, but Christ's coming and death were events still future.

*Mrs. M.* I am glad, Mary, that you called my attention to that, because in many of the predictions concerning Christ in the psalms, he is referred to as though he had already come. The fu-

ture tense is not used, but the past, as though the event had already taken place. God has ordained the event, and makes it known, and therefore, in a certain sense it is the same as though it had already taken place.

*John.* Mother, you and father have often told us, while young, to store as much of God's word away in our memories as we can. It seems to me that one great benefit from singing psalms, is that we become acquainted with them, and they are stored up in memory, and thus God's word is in our minds.

*Mrs. M.* The songs of a nation exert a great influence on that nation. The songs of the church exert a great influence upon that church; and therefore I think no church should lightly regard the matter of praise; and what could be safer to use as matter of praise than God's

own word! I want you to remember that you can pass through life but once; that if you make mistakes, you cannot go back and repair those mistakes. One good plan to avoid mistakes, is to take advice of those who have traveled life's path before you.

You see from our talk this evening, how good men in the past have prized the psalms of Scripture; how highly they have spoken in their favor. And you have every reason to believe, if your mind is well stored with God's own songs, you will not regret it in old age. As you shall travel this road but once, try and travel aright. When I was a young girl I had a companion who cared not for sound, wholesome reading, but spent her time reading novels: Not long ago she told me she deeply regretted wasting her time in this way;—that now she was so

very ignorant, and that she had read enough books to have made her well informed, if they had been the right kind of books. But they were not. She could not go back and live those years over again.

To you I say, be sure you are right; and you cannot be wrong in singing psalms in God's praise.

## MR. MATHEWS' STORY.

CHILDREN, you and mother will remember the visit we had over a year ago from my old school-mate, David Ashton. for some years he had been living in the West, and he entertained us very pleasantly, describing that country, and relating adventures which he had while there.

I remember one day, as he and I were

driving out to call upon some of our old friends, he related an adventure which I will tell you this evening.

At the time it occurred, he had recently moved into Iowa, and settled upon a broad prairie. There was not a tree or bush growing within three miles of his house. There were only two or three houses on all the prairie;—no roads, or fences. In winter the place appeared exceedingly dreary and cheerless. They were often visited by snow-storms, during which it was dangerous to be out. Every track was soon filled with snow, and the drifting snow kept you from seeing more than a few feet in any direction. There was no road to follow, no fence to guide one, therefore persons lost in such a storm, wandered back and forth until wearied and cold, they lay down, and fell asleep to awake no more in this life.

Hundreds of people have thus perished on our western prairies.

Mr. Ashton provided against such an accident, by buying a small compass which in winter he carried in his pocket, and having accurately noted the direction in which his house lay from the different landmarks around, he thought he could find his way home in any storm.

One pleasant winter day he rode to a town ten miles away, on some business. He was detained longer than he expected, and as he left the town, one of those snow-storms had commenced. When he reached the landmark on the edge of his prairie, he could barely see the needle in his compass, night was so near. He felt that here he had an infallible guide, but he had not sufficient light. He might mistake north for south, and east for west. But there were other things to

help him: he had noticed the way the wind blew; he also remembered the words of Isaiah,—“The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib,” and he felt he could trust some to the instinct of his horse. The compass faintly seen by the dim light, aided by remembering the direction of the wind, and also aided by the instinct of the horse, guided him safely through the gathering darkness, and the drifting snow to his own door.

In this world we are travelers. We are not at home, but are going to our home, which is heaven. The way is hid from us. Great darkness and storms have hid the way. God in his goodness has given us something which is a sure guide, namely, his word. God’s word is a guide only when seen in the light shed upon it by his holy Spirit. But our

minds are so darkened by sin, that often the light we have is not sufficient to see clearly the path of duty laid down in God's word. We may not read it aright. While it points out the right way, we for lack of light may be led in the wrong way. Therefore like my friend Ashton, we should try ourselves by other marks to see if we are rightly reading God's word.

One of these is the teachings of good men. We all know that many men have lived blameless lives on earth, and dying have left sweet memories behind them. Your mother has mentioned some such to you to-night, and has told you how highly they have spoken of the Psalms.

I want to praise God. I want to praise him aright. I search his word to learn what to sing, and I find him telling me to sing Psalms. I examine the Psalms,

and I think they are proper, and suitable to be sung in his praise. But I may not have the light of the Spirit. I may be mistaken. Therefore I try myself by others. I search the writings of godly men, and when I find them giving such testimony to the Psalms as they do, I am led to hope that in this respect I have correctly read God's word. When Mr. Ashton looked intently at his compass on that night, and found as well as he could what it said, he then noticed the way the wind blew, and which way his horse inclined to go, and as all these agreed, he concluded he was correct, and pressed on:



## CHAPTER VI.

### *FIFTH EVENING.*

#### CHRIST IN THE PSALMS.

Quotations from the metrical version of the Psalms — Story — The new knife — Doctor Dwight.

RS. M. I have been looking thro' my psalm-book, and have marked certain verses which I am convinced speak of Christ; and I will read them to you. But these are only a few of the many verses which speak of Christ.

Willie, you may tell me whose son Christ is.

*Willie.* As a divine Being, Christ is the Son of God; as a man, he is the son of David.

*Mrs. M.* That is true; and this is set forth in the Psalms.

“The sure decree I will declare,  
The Lord hath said to me,  
Thou art mine only Son; this day  
I have begotten thee.”

—*Psalm ii. 7.*

This verse shows him as God’s Son. I will next read of him as David’s son.

“I with my chosen one have made  
A covenant graciously;  
And to my servant whom I loved,  
To David, sworn have I;  
That I thy seed establish shall  
Forever to remain,  
And will to generations all  
Thy throne build and maintain.”

—*Psalm lxxxix. 3, 4.*

What is here said is true of none of David’s sons, except Christ. He is es-

ta blished forever as King, and his throne  
is built to all generations.

We shall next read of the nature of  
the covenant here named:

“I’ll make him my first-born more high  
Than kings of any land;  
My love I’ll ever keep for him,  
My cov’nant fast shall stand.”

—*Psalm lxxxix. 27, 28.*

He is here declared to be a king.

We shall next read about the glory  
of his kingdom:

“His large and great dominion shall  
From sea to sea extend;  
It from the river shall reach forth,  
Unto earth’s utmost end.  
Yea all the mighty kings on earth  
Before him down shall fall:  
And all the nations of the world  
Before him down shall fall.”

—*Psalm lxxii. 8-11:*

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We also see that his kingly office is eternal:

“Forever and forever is,  
O God, thy throne of might;  
The sceptre of thy kingdom is,  
A sceptre that is right.  
Thou lovest right, and hatest ill;  
For God, thy God, most high,  
Above thy fellows hath with th’ oil  
Of joy anointed thee.”

—Psalm xlv. 6, 7.

We shall next read of his priestly office:

“The Lord himself hath made an oath,  
And will repent him never;  
Of th’ order of Melchisedec,  
Thou art a priest forever.”

—Psalm cx. 4.

Then in Psalm lxviii. 11, there is reference made to his *prophetic* office:

“The Lord himself did give the word,  
The word abroad did spread;  
Great was the company of them  
The same who published.”

.Therefore we find Christ in the Psalms in his three offices,—prophet, priest, and king. Jesus speaks of himself as the good shepherd, and the Psalms speak of him as a shepherd. Psalm xxiii. 1.

“The Lord’s my shepherd, I’ll not want,  
He makes me down to lie  
In pastures green; he leadeth me  
The quiet waters by.”

To save sinners he had to come to our world, and as a servant obey his Father. He did so, and was obedient unto death. This is set forth in the Psalms. Psalm xl. 7, 8.

“Then to the Lord these were my words:  
I come behold and see;

Within the volume of the book,  
It written is of me;  
To do thy will I take delight,  
O thou my God that art;  
Yea, that most holy law of thine,  
I have within my heart."

Many psalms describe how he saved us; as for instance, in Psalm xl. 2.

"He took me from a fearful pit,  
And from the miry clay;  
And on a rock he set my feet,  
Establishing my way."

In the psalms we have the manner of his death described very minutely.

See how he was mocked. Psalm xxii. 6-8.

"But as for me, a worm I am,  
And as no man am prized.  
Reproached of men I am, and by  
The people am despised.

All that see me laugh me to scorn;  
Shoot out the lip do they.  
They nod, and shake their heads at me,  
And mocking thus do say,  
This man did trust in God, that he  
Would free him by his might;  
Let him deliver him, since he  
Had in him such delight."

Also in the 13th verse of the same Psalm:

"Their mouths they opened wide on me,  
Upon me gape did they;  
Like to a lion ravening,  
And roaring for his prey."

Then in verses 16–18, see how he died:

"For dogs have compassed me about;  
The wicked that did meet  
In their assembly me inclosed;  
They pierced my hands and feet.  
I all my bones may tell, they do  
Upon me look and stare;

Upon my vesture lots they cast,  
And clothes among them share."

So also Psalm lxix. 21, speaks of his treatment on the cross:—

"They also bitter gall did give  
Unto me for my meat.  
They gave me vinegar to drink,  
When as my thirst was great."

Then see how accurately Psalm xxii. 1 gives his dying words:—

"My God, my God why hast thou me  
Forsaken? . . . ?"

Hear what Psalm xvi. 9, 10 says about Christ going down to the grave:—

"Because of this my heart is glad,  
And joy shall be exprest  
Even by my glory; and my flesh  
In confidence shall rest.

Because my soul in grave to dwell,  
Shall not be left by thee;  
Nor wilt thou give thine Holy One  
Corruption there to see."

See how he ascended up to the Father's right hand. Psalm xlviij. 5.

"God is with shouts gone up, the Lord  
With trumpets sounding high."

Also Psalm lxviii. 18.

"Thou hast O Lord, most glorious,  
Ascended up on high;  
And in triumph victorious led  
Captive captivity."

The welcome he received from the angels and the hosts of heaven as he drew near its pearly gates, is believed to be described in Psalm xxiv, from the 7th verse to the end. And the welcome of his Father is described in Psalm cx. 1.

“The Lord did say unto my Lord,  
    Sit thou on my right hand,  
Until I make thy foes a stool,  
    Whereon thy feet may stand.”

Christ is to judge the world, and the Psalms speak of him coming for that purpose.

“Our God shall come, and shall no more  
    Be silent, but speak out;  
Before him fire shall waste, great storms  
    Shall compass him about.  
He to the heavens from above,  
    And to the earth below,  
Shall call that he his judgments may,  
    Before his people show.  
Let all my saints together be  
    Unto me gathered;  
Those that by sacrifice with me,  
    A covenant have made.”

—Ps. l. 3-5.

Again in Psalm xcvi. 7-9.

“Let seas and all their fulness roar;  
The world and dwellers there.  
Let floods clap hands, and let the hills  
Together joy declare  
Before the Lord; because he comes  
To judge the world comes he;  
He'll judge the world with righteousness,  
His folk with equity.

Time will not permit us to notice more quotations from the psalms speaking of Christ.

*John.* I am glad you have read those verses. I never knew before that the psalms were so full of Christ. Hereafter as I read or sing them, I shall always be looking for Christ.

*Mrs. M.* Then you will always be finding Christ, for the psalms are full of him.

## MR. MATHEWS' STORY.

When I was a small boy, my father

went to the city of Pittsburgh to sell marketing, two or three times a year. It was a long drive from my old home to the city, and father was always gone three days; and it was often late at night on the third day, before he reached home. My little brother and I sat up late watching for his return from one of these trips, because he had promised each of us a new knife; but at length sleep mastered us, and we retired to bed. Some time after we fell asleep father returned. The knives had not been forgotten, and they were slipped into our pockets. My little brother arose first, and while dressing discovered his knife. I did not discover mine, but on coming down stairs, and seeing my brother's, ran to my father and asked him to give me one. He put me off with evasive answers, until I became angry and vexed, almost ready to

cry; when without knowing it, I thrust my hand into my pocket, and drew out my knife. My surprise and joy at the discovery was such, that my father was much delighted. He told me I had done wrong to feel so angry and vexed about not getting my knife, when it was already in my pocket; that I ought to have asked my brother where he got his, and then felt in my own pockets; that in the future I should always be sure I had occasion to complain, *before* I complained.

So I say about all who find fault with the psalms, because they do not speak of Christ. They had better feel certain that there is no Christ there, before they complain. Their first duty is to examine and see if Christ is not there, and if they do that, they will find the psalms full of Christ.

But the great trouble is, that many

good people know very little about the psalms. Because they are not sung by them, they are not read and studied as they should be.

I remember once reading a story about General Putnam, of revolutionary times. In 1777, General Burgoyne was defeated by our army at Saratoga, and surrendered with all his army. His army was greatly feared by the colonists, and the news of its capture at first, seemed entirely too good to be true, but still it caused great rejoicing among our people. General Putnam was then stationed at Stony Point, and when the news reached that place, there was great rejoicing. Dr. Dwight, then a young man, was there either as a chaplain or as a soldier, and preached a sermon to the men very suitable to the occasion. His text was, "I will remove far off from you the northern

army." Joel ii. 20. All were well pleased with his sermon. General Putnam was present, and delighted with it. Speaking of it afterward to some of the officers he said the text was not in the Bible, but that Dwight had gotten it up for the occasion. An officer assured him that it was in the Bible, and pointed it out to him. Putnam looked at it and exclaimed, "Well, well, that does beat all. It seems to me that every thing is in the Bible, and Dwight is the boy that knows just where to find it."

There is much about Christ in the psalms, but it is not every man that knows just where to find it. Our minister told me that at college he had a fellow-student who was a firm friend of his. He was smart and talented, and took an honor in his class. He studied theology in another church, and was appointed a

professor in a college. While holding that position he visited his old friend, our pastor, and preached for him. On Sabbath-morning, he said to our pastor, "My text will be, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Would you select psalms that would be suitable? I am not as familiar with the psalms as I should be; in fact, I have neglected the psalms, and confined my studies too much to the New Testament." Now that is the way; people neglect the psalms; they do not sing them, they do not study them; they merely glance at them occasionally and in their ignorance of them they say there is no Christ in them.

## CHAPTER VII.

### *SIXTH EVENING.*

#### OBJECTIONS TO PSALMS.

Hymns are more tender and loving—More easily understood—Are better suited for revival work.

Story—A dream about a revival.

 RS. M. Those who advocate the use of hymns, are the persons who leave the good old way of praising God by singing psalms, and take hymns in their room; and it is their place to show us why they have done so. I would ask if any of you have ever heard hymn-singers give any reasons for laying aside the psalms? Remember we have already noticed their objection about Christ not being in the psalms.

*John.* We found the psalms speaking of Christ as "The Anointed, the Son, the holy One," and such names; but we do not find such dear and loving names applied to him as in the hymns. We do not find him called, "Dear Jesus, Sweet Jesus, Blessed Jesus, Sweet Savior, and such terms as are often applied to him in the hymns. I think with some persons, that is an objection to the use of the psalms.

*Mrs. M.* I believe some do think our psalmody cold and formal, because it lacks these tender, loving expressions. But we have in the Psalms the terms to denote Jesus which God gave us, and these ought to be enough. We do not find such terms as you have mentioned, applied to Jesus any where in the Bible. John, although the disciple whom Jesus loved, the one that leaned on his bosom

at supper, does not use such terms when speaking of him. I feel that it is a matter of doubtful propriety, to apply to Jesus Christ names and terms not applied to him in the word of God. The tendency of these times seems to be towards unbecoming familiarity with the name of Jesus Christ. That name demands our reverence. We are assured that "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth." We should treat it as a sacred name. With me, the fact that such terms are applied to Jesus Christ in hymns, is an argument against their use.

*Willie.* To me it seems that hymns are more easily understood, also more interesting and pleasing, than the psalms; and I believe I have heard somebody give that as a reason why they ought to be sung.

*Mrs. M.* Many persons say of certain other books: They are more interesting and pleasing than the Bible. Are we then to throw aside the Bible, and read whatever seems more interesting and pleasing?

I have noticed on an evening when we would be reading some interesting Sabbath-school book, or some well written history or book of travels, you would all be wide awake and listening; but when we began to read the Bible, I could see you looking drowsy and listless. It did not seem to be so easily understood, so interesting and pleasing as the other book; but surely this ought to be no reason for throwing the Bible aside. Because father sees you more attentive while other books are being read, ought he to give up reading the Bible during family worship, and read some other book? What

force therefore, has the objection that the Psalms are not as plain and interesting as the hymns? Books of fiction are more interesting and attractive than the Bible; ought we therefore, to quit reading the Bible, and read only fictitious books?

I wish you always to remember this in reading the Bible: Those that wrote the Bible made no effort to work upon our feelings. The truth is there given briefly and simply, and in language suitable to any period in the existence of our race. All Bible narratives are very brief, much being expressed in a few words. Hence they are more difficult to understand than if related more fully, and not so captivating as if told so as to work up on our feelings. I ask you to notice one verse in the Bible. John, xviii. 40. "Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was

a robber." How briefly this is told. If some modern writers would tell it, think how they would paint it up. They would portray in most touching language the innocence of Jesus, his humility, his life spent in doing good, and then draw in striking contrast the dark, bloody, cruel life of Barabbas, his wicked, blood-thirsty disposition, show the crimes he had committed, then, that the Jews would ask that Jesus be slain, and he released. They would so paint up the scene, that we could not but be struck with wonder at the choice of the Jews. Yet the simple language of the Bible is, "Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber." You see there is no effort in the Bible to work upon the feelings.

Fictitious works require no study or thought, hence read with ease. But if we would read the Bible with ease and

pleasure, we must read with close attention, and think, and meditate on what we read. Look at what God has done in nature; stones are plenty upon the surface of the ground, but to find gold and silver, we have to dig deep; sand is plenty upon the sea-shore, but pearls are found in the deep, and men have to dive after them. Hymns are pleasing and captivating, because men compose them to work upon our feelings; while the Psalms are like other portions of God's word, brief, full of matter, calling for deep thought, and hence not captivating because you know we all incline to be lazy, and like that best which requires least thought or study.

*Mary.* Last winter I stayed all night at Mr. Stillman's. They were having meetings in their church, and we all went to it that evening, and I thought it a very

noisy meeting: I never saw such noise and confusion in any meeting. They called it a revival meeting. After we came home, Mr. Stillman asked me if we ever had such meetings in our church; I told him that at our communions we often had preaching for several days and nights, but we never had any such noise and excitement. He replied, You could not have any excitement so long as your church sticks to your dry, prosy old Psalms, you can have no exciting meetings such as we havé; it is our stirring hymns that suit such meetings.

*Mrs. M.* A true revival is brought about by the influence of God's holy Spirit, who rekindles religion in the hearts of his true people, and who also inclines the hearts of the godless to seek religion. Many so called revivals are mere excitements. Let men hold meeting after

meeting, upon almost any subject, and have address after address upon that subject; let them sing about it, talk about it, pray about it, and the result will be that they will grow excited on that subject, it matters not what it be. Many so called revivals of religion are merely this excitement. By meetings, addresses, songs &c., their feelings are wrought up on religion, just as they may be upon temperance, slavery, politics &c. For such a revival, exciting hymns may be found much more suitable than the Psalms. But let the revival be indeed the work of the holy Spirit, and will not the Spirit find his own words better suited to his own work than the words of mere men? It seems to me that a great evidence of a true revival of religion would be to find the people filled with a love for God's word, instead of casting it

aside for the word of men. The heart touched by the Spirit, is led to see the beauty of God's word, and to prize it. In revivals where the Psalms have been used, they have been found very suitable; and the language of the workers has been, How delightful are the Psalms for such a season! What would we do without them?

## MR. MATHEWS' STORY.

THE talk this evening about the suitability of the Psalms for revival work, recalled to my mind a remarkable dream about a revival of religion, which I once read.

There was once a pastor who had charge of a large congregation, and the congregation was remarkably dead and lifeless. As he mused upon the state of

his congregation, and wondered what was best to do to revive it, he had a remarkable dream or vision which showed him his duty.

He dreamed that before him lay a valley, and the ground all through the valley was as white as though covered with snow. But when he went down into the valley and examined this snow, he found it *very strange snow*. It was human bones. The whole valley was filled with the bones of men. It seemed to him as if a mighty army had there perished, their bodies being left unburied. The flesh had decayed from the bones, and the sun taken away all moisture from them, so that nothing remained of all that army, except these dry bones which covered all the valley. He looked at them passing through the valley; perhaps here and

there he picked up a bone and examined it more closely, and he found that the bones were very dry. As he gazed around wondering at the sight, a voice spake to him from far up in the air, "Son of man, can these bones live?" He believed the voice to be God's angel; but how strange the question, "Could these bones live?" What power could cause these bones to become living men? He knew God alone could make them live, and that if he were pleased to exercise his power in that way, they would live; so he replied, "O Lord God thou knowest." Thou only can make them live, but thou art able to do this.

The voice of God's angel replied: In making these bones live, you must work with me, and I shall not make them live unless you do your part. To honor you, I will give you something to do in this

great work. The man replied, What shall I do? The voice answered, Speak unto these bones the words I shall tell thee.

. It seemed very strange to this man to stand and speak unto a valley full of nothing but dry bones. He may have felt like saying: That will do no good. Why speak to them; they are dead and dried? Still the man never hesitated; but taking his stand in the midst of the valley, spake to them the words God told him. “O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.”

Notice, it was the “word of the Lord” he spake to them, not his own word. God, instead of speaking directly to them through his angels, spake unto them through this man. “O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, Behold

I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live, and I will lay sinews upon you, and I will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord." As soon as he had spoken these words, a very strange thing occurred. All the bones in the valley began to move. I suppose every skull turned over with its eye-sockets looking upward; the under jaw flew to its mate, the joints of the back-bone, with the ribs sought their appropriate places; the legs, feet, arms and hands found where they belonged, and thus as bone sought bone, they struck against each other, making a noise and shaking, and the valley no longer appeared filled with scattered bones, but full of skeletons—perfect skeletons; not a single bone lacking in any one of them. As the man

gazed in wonder on the sight, he saw sinews growing upon them, and flesh coming up upon them. What a mighty change, and what had caused that change? It was by the voice of God which he had spoken unto them. God's power exercised through his spoken word had changed that valley of bones, into one filled with men, but still the bodies gave no signs of life. He looked at them passing from body to body, and, although the flesh appeared fair and plump, it gave no signs of life; and he thought, These bodies are no better than dry bones unless they become alive.

As he thus mused, he heard again that voice saying, "Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breath upon these slain that they may live."

He did so, and the wind blew upon them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army, so that they filled all the valley. As he looked upon them in wonder, the same voice said to him, This valley represents your congregation, and these bones your people in their present condition; and these living men show what they may become through your instrumentality. It is plainly your duty to declare unto them God's word, and pray to God's Spirit which is here represented by the wind, to come and breath upon them, that they may live.

That congregation was the house of Isreal, and that pastor was the prophet Ezekiel. You can read of this vision or dream, in the xxxvii. chap. of his prophecy. Now children, let us notice this revival. God was its author. He alone

could make those dead bones live. Man had a part to do, but it was merely to declare the word of God, and to pray to the Spirit to give life. At the present time, man has something to do in the reviving of the church; it is to declare the word of the Lord, and pray to the Spirit. All means devised by men to create excitement are useless. The shaking among the dry bones was caused by the word of the Lord, and so is the trembling among sinners; hence it is important to have that word, both spoken and sung in its simplicity.

Are not the Psalms we sing more purely the word of God, than the hymns used by others? Why then should any say that hymns are much more suitable for revival work. True revivals are brought about by the Spirit of God working through the preaching and teaching of

God's word. The work is God's, and he uses his own word. God only can give life to the corpse; men may by electricity cause it to move and show some signs of life, but still there is no life there. Men may create excitement in the church and cause it to show signs of revival, but the church is still dead; for this excitement they may find their hymns best suited, but I am convinced that when God works in revivals, he can use his Psalms, and will honor his own word above the words of mere men. Then it will be, "O ye dry bones, hear the *word of the Lord.*"



## CHAPTER VIII.

### SEVENTH EVENING.

#### OBJECTIONS TO PSALMS.—*Continued.*

Easy to find fault—*Objection*: Difficult to understand the Psalms—Will understand them better if we sing them—Plainer to us than to Israel—Need not know them perfectly—No errors in the Psalms—*Objection*: Cursing Psalms—No malice in God—Language suited to the times—Spoken against God's enemies—Prophetic—Jesus speaks in them—Story about two Indians.

MRS. M. We will now hear more objections that are urged as reasons for not using the Psalms of Scripture in the worship of God. But I wish you to remember this: It is always easy to find fault, and when persons hunt for faults in the Psalms, or for excuses to justify themselves in casting them aside, they may easily find such; but whether

these faults or objections have any real weight, is quite another matter.

*Mary.* I have been thinking over the talk of last evening, and it seems to me the greatest objection to the Psalms is that they abound in passages dark, and difficult to be understood, so that we sing and do not understand what we sing.

*Mrs. M.* That is an objection which seemingly has great weight. In 1 Cor. xiv. 15, Paul says, "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding." Also in Psalm xlvi. 7, we read, "Sing ye praises with understanding." Thus the Bible teaches that we should sing with an understanding of what we sing; hence the objection, that if we do not understand the Psalms, we ought to sing what we do understand. But the objection has really no weight.

A great object we should ever keep

before us, is to know God's word. And if we sing the Psalms feeling that we do not understand them, will it not stir us up to search them, study them, and thus to know God's word more perfectly? You will find members of psalm-singing churches, as a class, have a better understanding of the Psalms, than those that sing hymns.

Again, all admit that these Psalms were given to the Israelites in old times by God himself, to be used by them in his worship. Do you think they were more plain to them, than they are to us? Could they understand them better than we? I feel certain that they could not. They were not educated as we are, had not books explaining them as we have. Then they had not the new Testament which helps us very much to understand the Psalms. The life and teachings of

Jesus Christ throw much light on the Psalms; and besides, many passages in the Psalms are explained to us by Christ and his apostles. Therefore the Psalms should be plainer to us, than to the Israelites. If we can say they are too dark and mysterious for us, and not fit for us to use, we must also say that they were too dark for the Israelites: because they certainly ought to be more plain and simple to us, than to them. Our objection then comes to this: We say of God, that he by his holy Spirit, gave to the Israelites songs to sing in his praise, which were not suitable; and surely such a charge made against the holy Spirit would be wicked. If they are too dark for us, they were too dark for them.

While we are to sing with the understanding, and while we should earnestly seek to understand the Psalms as we sing

them, yet it is not necessary that we have a perfect understanding of them. We are told to pray, exercising faith: but it is not understood that we are not to pray, until we exercise perfect faith. We read God's word in worship, but we do not perfectly understand it; are we then to lay it aside, and read some work we do understand?

As we sing a Psalm, there are verses we do understand, and others we do not; but we can rest assured that those verses that are dark to us, have no wicked meaning, that there are no errors in them, and that is something we could not say of a merely human composition. If the songs of praise we sing are merely human, we surely ought to understand their meaning perfectly, lest they contain errors.

*John.* Mother, I have heard some say that certain Psalms were full of curses;

that they were cursing Psalms, and ought not to be used under the gospel dispensation.

*Mrs. M.* That objection is often made. I think it also, has no weight. When persons speak so about the Psalms, they seem to forget that all Scripture is given us by God. David says: 2. Sam. xxiii. 2.—“The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.” Can we say that God’s holy Spirit gave us songs to use in praise, and that those songs are unfit, because so full of malice and cursing. You know “God is love.” Could God give us songs with malice in them? Hear what God says about his own word in these very Psalms. “The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.” Ps. xii. 6. “Thy word is very pure.” Ps. cxix. 140. After that

testimony to the perfect purity of God's word, surely there could be no cursing or malice in it. Still the language of some Psalms is so harsh, that persons regard them as cursing Psalms.

I think the age in which the Psalms were given, had something to do with it. The revelations of God whenever given, have been suited to the age and people to whom first given. That was an age of war. Men were harsh and cruel in punishing crime, and the language used was affected by the feelings of the times. The age in which we live is different. It is an age of peace, of kindness, and of love; and therefore the Psalms appear harsh to us. But the language was suitable to the feelings of that age; and if war should ever arise in our land, we would find those very Psalms suited to all conditions and circumstances in which

a person could be placed.\* Then David's circumstances had something to do with the language employed. He was a warrior and a ruler. As a ruler, it was his duty to punish transgressors; and some of the harsh language is used in proclaiming punishment on such. Then David's enemies, were God's enemies, also, the enemies of God's people. Often, it was as the prophet of the Lord, that he denounced vengeance upon them, and the Psalm is prophetic. In others of the Psalms, in regard to which this objection is raised, it is Christ that speaks, and

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\* JOHN experienced the truth of his mother's words. During the Rebellion he entered the army, and served until the end of the war—being two years and four months in the service. He carried his Bible with him, and he and his companions often sang Psalms, and found that those old war-songs expressed their feelings.

proclaims what shall befall his enemies, and all that plot against his church.

My candid belief is, that when we rightly understand the Psalms, we will find no malice in them, and no verse but is suitable and proper to be sung upon some occasion. Therefore, I can see no weight in the objection. We will be compelled to stop now, but John's objection will be further considered next Sabbath-evening. The evening was very cold; the wind was blowing and the snow flying. Fresh coal was placed upon the grate, Mr. Mathews stirred out the ashes as we drew our chairs into a circle around the fire to hear his story.

#### MR. MATHEWS' STORY.

NOT many years ago, Ohio was a wilderness inhabited by savage Indians; and

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away in the northern part of the state, near Lake Erie, lived a tribe of Indians not often engaged in war. Their peaceable disposition was owing to the teachings of an old man, a member of their tribe. When he was a young man he had been a warrior, and won the confidence of his tribe by his bravery upon the field of battle; but he was now an old man, and had no delight in war,—in truth he hated war with a bitter hatred. As his tribe paid much respect to the counsel of old men, his words had power in their councils; for he was the oldest man in the tribe, and his words were always for peace. If his tribe talked of war, his voice was sure to be raised against it. He constantly urged his tribe to cultivate the ground, telling them that such was the will of the Great Spirit, who had stored up there food for his

children, and desired them to bring it out by farming. He told them that the Great Spirit hated war, and desired his children to seek their living by raising corn, gathering nuts, hunting and fishing. If ever his tribe captured prisoners, he plead for their lives. Often at his request prisoners were released, and sent back to their homes. Such acts made all the surrounding tribes friendly to them.

Much of his time was spent in the woods by himself. He said he was talking with the Great Spirit, and that he always spoke in such gentle tones, showing that he was for peace.

As he would walk by the shore of the Lake, he heard him speak in the murmur of the waves; as he wandered in the forest, he listened to the wind sighing in the tree-tops, and said it was the voice of the Great Spirit. The little birds sang

of him; the rain-drops patterning on the leaves were also his gentle tones; and the snow-flakes so gently falling, were also emblematic of his gentle ways.

Thus he held communion with the Great Spirit, hearing him speak in nature, as the leaves rustled, or the rivulet sang its murmuring song of gladness; and he said all these voices cried for peace; that the Being who thus talked with him, was surely good and gentle, and loved peace and quiet; that war, the tumult of battle, the burning of villages, and slaying of people, was what he abhorred. That since God was so good and gentle, he loved those men who were good and gentle like himself; and that if they desired the love of that Great Spirit, they must be such. Therefore his counsel always was, Abandon war, and be at peace with all men.

At the same time away to the south of the Ohio river, lived another Indian, also a very old man, and one much respected by the men of his tribe. But his teachings were the very opposite of his northern brother. He was ever for war; war was his delight. In every council his voice was heard urging his tribe to war and bloodshed. As the warriors went forth to battle, he said to them, Spare none! Kill the men and women, because they are our enemies! Kill the little children, because if spared, they will grow up our enemies! If prisoners are taken, bring them here that we may torture them, and thus fire our hearts for deeds of blood and cruelty! He would gather the young men of the tribe about him, and relate to them bloody deeds he had done, or saw their fathers perform, and urge them to accomplish deeds more

cruel still. He professed to be a worshiper of the Great Spirit, and spent much time alone in the woods communing with him. He said that the Great Spirit showed him how he delighted in war, proclaimed it to him in the thunder's roar. The floods cried for war, and the voice of the tempest was for blood. The earthquake told of an angry God, thirsting for blood. He would speak to the people about the pestilence that took away their tribe by hundreds, and say it was this great Being, and it showed that he delighted in deaths. He would tell of diseases by which men died, floods by which they were drowned, and fires by which they were burned, and say all told of anger and cruelty, and said that if their tribe would please him, they must fight, they must shed blood.

God has revealed himself to us in na-

ture, as well as in his word. These two aged Indians read of him in nature, but how differently they read. One said his great delight was in peace; the other said he delighted in war. They studied about the same God, as revealed in the same works. So men take God's word, and teach from it entirely different doctrines. Some teach from God's word that he is all love, others, that he is a cruel being. David says in Ps. ci. 1. "I will sing of mercy and judgment." So through all the Scriptures, mercy and judgment go together, so also in nature. Men fail to see both these. Some say God is revealed as all mercy; others, as wrath and cruelty.

I rejoice that the Psalms sing of his judgments, as well as his mercy. The tendency of the times is to dwell too exclusively upon the mercy of God, and

ignore his judgments. Human hymns yield to this feeling of our times, and dwell upon the mercy of God, to the exclusion of judgment. The use of the Psalms will aid us in seeing God just as he is:—A glorious being who is just and also merciful.



## CHAPTER IX.

### *EIGHTH EVENING.*

#### CONTRASTS.

The two dispensations contrasted—Praise and prayer contrasted—Some persons have great power in prayer—A minister's wife—God desires us to pray aright—Story—Duty shown by a contrast with the animals on the farm.

**M**RS. M. Last evening John stated as an objection, that the Psalms were too harsh and cruel to be used under the gospel dispensation. We will begin to-night with a consideration of that.

We live under the new, or gospel dispensation. Do the Psalms suit this dispensation? I have heard men say the

former dispensation was very different from this;—this is one of love and mercy; the former was not. But I say God is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; he changes not. He could no more tolerate malice or revenge under the former dispensation than under this. If this is a dispensation of love, so is that. Look at Lev. xix. 17, 18.—“Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, or bear any grudge against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself; I am the Lord.” There is here all the love and tenderness of our dispensation.

When we turn to the new dispensation, we find there language just as harsh and cursing, as you find in the Psalms. Take your Bibles and turn to a few of

them. 1 Cor. xvi. 22. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha." He shall be accursed when the Lord cometh. Is not that harsh? Again, in 2 Tim. iv. 14. "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works. Does not that resemble a curse? Also read Rev. vi. 9, 10. "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar, the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held; and they cried with a loud voice, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Then Rev. xvi. 5, 6.— "And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus; for they shed the blood of

saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy." Do not these passages read like those Psalms that are spoken of as cursing Psalms?

Thus in these, and also other passages which might be given, we see that under both dispensations, similar language is used, and we cannot say that songs of praise proper to be used under the one, would be unfit for the other; because God's word shows him to be ever the same.

*Mary.* I remember reading in a newspaper, that prayer and praise were one; and if no matter is given to be used in prayer, why argue for the use of the Psalms in praise. If we can pray our own words, why not sing our own words?

*Mrs. M.* That argument will not

stand. Prayer and praise are not alike, although they go together. We praise him in our prayers, and pray to him in singing his praise; yet praise and prayer as exercises in his worship, are very different. To pray, is to make known our wants to God; and as each soul has its own wants, we can do this best in our own language. But praise is to proclaim the character of God, tell his attributes, and speak of his wonderful works. God could give us matter to use in doing this, which would be far better than our own words. In prayer, the thoughts that pass through our minds suggest the words we are to use; but in praise, the words we use should suggest the thoughts that pass through our minds. Ought we not then to be very careful what words we use, and would not God's words be best?

When we meet for prayer, one prays

aloud, and the rest follow mentally and say their amen to the petitions he utters. No book or form is needed. We believe it is the duty of all to sing; and how could all in an assembly sing in concert, unless they had the words prepared? You see, then, that it is necessary to have the matter for praise prepared, and God has given us a book, containing 150 such songs of praise, but you find no book of prayers given. It is true there are prayers in God's word, but we have no intimation to use them; and when Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he did not tell them to use the form he gave them, but said: "After this manner therefore pray ye." Matth. vi. 9. If God had said he had commissioned one of his prophets to give us a book of prayers, as he commissioned David to give us a book of Psalms, and if such a book had been used

in his church, if Christ and his apostles had used it, and we could point to no passage in God's word prohibiting its use, then, I say, we ought to use it still. But we have nothing of this. God gives us no book of prayers, and he promises his holy Spirit to help our infirmities, as we engage in that exercise; but he has given us a book of praise, and we search his word in vain, to find any promise of his Spirit to aid us in making songs to use in his praise. Therefore, I say these exercises are not alike; and while we are at liberty to make our own prayers, we are not at liberty to make our own songs of praise.

*Willie.* Why is it that some of our church-members can make better prayers than others? Does God help them more?

*Mrs. M.* There is something about prayer that seems strange to me. I can-

not tell why every petition offered by one person, will go directly to your heart; while the prayers of another, although offered with less hesitation, and in better language, has no effect upon you. I can account for it only by saying that the one is gifted with the spirit of prayer, while the other has not that spirit. Years ago a minister preached at Oak Ridge, whose wife was a remarkably plain, unassuming woman. Not a woman of great mind, or much education, but still a woman wonderfully gifted in prayer. I knew nothing of her power in that way, until one day she and her husband were visiting here. The men had gone out for a walk over the farm, when she and I, after talking about our children, agreed to kneel down and commit them to God in prayer. She led, and I shall never forget that prayer. She seemed to me as if she had

God by his hand, and wrestled, and begged with him for the favors sought. There was a sweetness and pathos about her voice and manner, that went to my heart. My tears fell like rain, I was so moved; and I afterwards learned that such was the character of all her prayers. I once asked her how she possessed such power in prayer, and she told me she knew not; that she made no preparation, but merely presented the petitions suggested by her own heart. I then felt that prayer was the gift of God.

God desires us to pray in a right and proper way. In the Lord's prayer, he has given us a pattern; after that manner we are to pray. As our wants and circumstances are ever changing, he could not give us a form to use when we prayed, but he has given us a pat-

tern after which to shape our prayers. Still, lest we be not able to pray aright, he has given us his holy Spirit to help us. As if he had said to us, I want you to pray to me in a proper manner; therefore I have sent forth to you my Spirit, who will see that your petitions are presented aright. Seek his assistance. You see God is particular that we pray to him aright, and he is also particular that we praise him in a proper manner.

He could give us a book of songs, and he has given us such a book, suitable for all ages and occasions, and surely we ought to use them. How can we praise him if we do not?

## MR. MATHEWS' STORY.

WELL children, as I listened this evening to your talk about prayer and praise,

it occurred to me that we might illustrate these two parts of worship, by a reference to ourselves, and the animals on our farm.

To these poor, dumb brutes in some respects, we are what God is to us. We watch over them, feed them, care for them, and they look to us for the supply of their wants. While their wants are supplied by God, yet he supplies them through us, and they look to us to have them supplied. Our animals make their wants known to us; in fact, they ask us for food and drink, they pray to us for these things. For instance, our dog Carlo, when hungry, stands at the door and begs; and when we go out, in various ways shows us his wants. His eyes, ears, and tail, are all used to show us that he wants something.

As you go to the barn in the morn-

ing, notice how the animals call to you for food. The horses greet you with a gentle whinny, and begin to paw in their stalls. The cows, tied in their stable, shake their heads and stretch out their necks, and the pigs begin to squeal for their corn.

Thus these poor, dumb animals cry to us for food, and we hear their cries, and supply their wants.

Thus we may illustrate prayer. Our animals feel their wants, and knowing that we feed them, call to us for food; and notice each one calls in its own way. So in praying to God; each man or woman feels his or her wants, and believing that God can, and will supply, calls upon God to have those wants supplied.

But we believe that we may also use these animals to illustrate praise. We may give this as one definition of our

praise. It is paying God so far as it is possible to pay him, for his care of us.

We may say that our animals praise us, by paying us as far as they can for our care of them. You know how useful Carlo is to us. He drives our cows to and from the pasture, guards the house at night, and also when we are absent; drives away strange animals that come upon our farm, and does much work for us. You know, also, how our horses toil for us, day after day, all the year round; dragging the plow and harrow, drawing the heavily laden wagon or sled, pulling us along swiftly in the carriage, or carrying us upon their backs. How obedient and kind they are, and how patiently they labor for us.

Then think how kind and gentle our cows are, and how quietly they stand

night and morning, and give their sweet delicious milk.

In these ways our animals praise us; they, as they can, give us pay for our care of them. But we have to teach them thus to serve us.

Our horses have to be broken, and you all know that it takes much labor, care and patience to break a colt;—that is, to subdue it and teach it what we want it to do for us. We teach it the use of the bridle, and to turn by the drawing of the rein, or at the word; to start and stop when told, and to use its strength in such a way as to profit us. So also dogs, cows, oxen, or any animal that works for us, have to be trained by us.

So God teaches us how to serve him, tells us how to live and act, that our lives may be to his praise. His will is

made plain to us, and it is by obeying that will, we praise him.

Our animals please us by obeying our wishes; and the more perfectly they obey, the more we are pleased with them. We please God by obeying his revealed will, and the more perfectly we are enabled to do this, the more pleasing is our conduct in his sight.

One thing is certain, we can never please him by doing only what is pleasing to us; because what *seems* good and right to us, is not good and right in his sight.

We well know if our animals did only the things pleasing to them, they would not obey our will. Carlo would run away to our neighbors, and play with their dogs, instead of guarding the house and barn; or would run after rabbits or squirrels, instead of driving away the

pigs, or chasing the cows to the pasture. The horses would roam the fields, instead of working for us, as they now do. It is plain to us that our animals cannot serve us, and at the same time do their own pleasure.

Praise is a service we render to God, and it can be done only by following God's directions. He has not neglected to give us plain and full directions in his word, how to praise him. Your mother has already pointed out to you these directions. Follow these directions he has given you, and your praise will be acceptable to him.



## CHAPTER X.

### *NINTH EVENING.*

#### EXCLUSIVE USE OF THE PSALMS.

Many persons object to this—The lame in sacrifice—Commanded to use Psalms—Strange fire—Naaman the leper—Warned by the example of other churches—When may hymns be sung?

Story—Examples of obedience—Saul an example of disobedience.

MRS. M. I think that to-night we will talk some about the reasons why we use ONLY Psalms in worship. Some people say, I think the Psalms are very good, in fact I think them better than the hymns; but then I do not want to be confined exclusively to their use.

*Mary.* I believe that many people object to our church, not because they dislike the Psalms, but because they dislike their exclusive use. They desire the privilege of using hymns if they wish; and would it not be an advantage to our church to allow them that privilege?

*Mrs. M.* I will briefly state why I think the view taken by our church is right, and why we should insist upon an exclusive use of the Psalms in the worship of God.

In our former talks we have seen that the Psalms are better than the hymns, as God's words must be better than man's. We surely ought to use the best in the worship of God.

Let us open our Bibles, and read some of God's directions about his worship. Deut. xv. 21. "And if there be any blemish therein, as if it be lame, or blind,

or have any ill blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the Lord thy God." This teaches us that the very best they had, they were to sacrifice unto the Lord their God; that the lame or diseased was not fit to be offered. Let us now turn to Mal. i. 8. "And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and the sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto the governor: will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts." Also in the 13 verse;—"And ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye have brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord." If we believe that the Psalms are better than the hymns, and yet use hymns in God's worship, are we not doing the same as if in former times a person had brought a lame or sick animal to

offer it in sacrifice? Surely in the worship of God we should always use the very best. What songs could be better than God's own songs? Therefore, I say, sing nothing but the Psalms.

But another reason is, God has commanded the use of the Psalms. He tells us to sing Psalms. He gave us the book of Psalms. A man was especially qualified by God for this work; he was called the "Sweet Psalmist of Israel." They were sung in the temple at its dedication with God's approval; as they sang them, the glory of the Lord filled the temple. Jesus Christ and his apostles sang them as he dwelt with men. God has never withdrawn his approval of the Psalms. In no part of his word has he told us to make or use any other songs. Therefore, I feel that his command to use them is binding upon us now. I feel that God's

directions to all his people are, In my praise use the Psalms I have given you. When we worship God, we ought to obey his directions with care. John, would you turn to Lev. x. and read the first and second verses?

*John.* "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron took either of them his censer and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord."

*Mrs. M.* These two men died for a sin which they had committed, here said to be offering strange fire before the Lord. In chap. ix. 24., you learn that fire came out from God, and consumed the burnt offering; while in chap. vi. 13., the priests were told to keep the fire ever

burning upon the altar, and never let it go out. This fire kindled by God himself and ever kept burning, was the sacred fire, the kind that should have been placed in the censer. But these men took common fire, and thus disobeyed the directions God had given, and were punished as an example to the children of men.

Mary, I want you to turn to 11. Kings, v. chap., and read to us the account of the cleansing of Naaman the leper. (Mary did so.) I wish you to notice particularly the message Elisha sent him. "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." Also the words of Naaman: "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them and be clean?"

The sons of Aaron said, Fire is fire, there is no difference what fire we take; and, setting aside God's directions, they suffered for it.

Naaman said, Water is water; the waters in my own country are better than those of this; I will go there and wash in them. Had he done so, his leprosy would have clung to him still; but he resolved to obey to the letter, the command, and was healed. The water did not heal him. The cure came from God; but it would not have come unless he had fully obeyed the directions given.

The priests were not at liberty to use any fire they saw proper, they must use what God directed.

Naaman could not wash in any river and be healed, but must use the one the prophet had named.

So we are not at liberty to use other

songs in God's praise; we must use the ones he has directed to be used. I use Psalms because commanded to use them, and I refuse to use hymns because I find no command for their use.

But another reason why I oppose the use of hymns to any extent, is, I see the result in those churches where they are used; the Psalms have been entirely crowded out, they are not used at all in those churches. To-day the only churches in our land that use the Psalms to any extent, are those that insist upon their exclusive use. All the churches that granted to hymns the least foothold, have finally cast the Psalms aside. Now, as I love these Psalms, and desire them to be sung by my children, and their children's children, I must oppose every effort to permit hymns to be used in our church, even to a limited extent.

*Willie.* Suppose a person is in a congregation where hymns are used, or in a family where they are sung in family worship. Would it be right for him to sing them there?

*Mrs. M.* It seems to me very plain that if a person believed it wrong to sing them in worship in his own church, or in his own family, he would feel it wrong to sing them in worship any place. The singing of hymns in the worship of God, is either right or wrong in itself, and is not made right or wrong by place or circumstances. If wrong in one place, it is in others.

Members of other churches say of us, You are too strict. We go to your church and sing Psalms with you, and when you come to our church, you ought to sing hymns with us. But they believe it is

right to sing Psalms; and in uniting with us in our praise, sacrifice no principle; but we profess that to sing hymns in the worship of God is wrong, and feel called upon to oppose, and testify against the practice. Therefore, when they ask us to sing with them, they ask us to do what we profess to be wrong, and what, if we are sincere in our profession, our conscience tells us is wrong.

*Mary.* I want to ask if it is wrong to sing hymns under any circumstances?

*Mrs. M.* I would say that my belief is that it is wrong to sing them in the public worship of God, because it is contrary to God's command, and a casting aside of the Psalms, given us by him for that purpose. But as songs for the fireside, family circle, or social party, I think it is perfectly right to use them. My belief is, that it is proper and right to sing

hymns, except when we engage in formal acts of worship. For such acts, God has given us directions in his word; and if we desire to have our worship accepted by him, we must follow those directions.

## MR. MATHEWS' STORY.

I have often spoken to you about obedience, and I feel very thankful to God that he has given me such obedient children. God makes a promise of long life and prosperity, so far as it shall serve for their good and his glory, to those children that obey their parents; and I feel that you, my children, can claim that promise. But I want you to be still more obedient to God, than you are to me. You are in God's army. In the army of Alexander the Great, were sol-

diers that had been born in the camp, and raised up in the army. You have been born in God's army, in his church. At your baptism, your mother and I gave you to God as his, and our prayers have ever been that you might grow up good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Remember the first and great principle in a soldier is his obedience to his commander. See that you obey your Great Commander.

Once, the Duke of Wellington when leading the armies of England, gave a certain order to an officer of engineers. The man began to present difficulties that lay in the way of executing the order, when the Duke turned quickly upon him and said with much severity, "Sir, I did not ask you for your opinion; I gave you my orders, and I expect them to be obeyed." There is a lesson in

these words of England's great warrior, which we should take to ourselves. Remember, it is not ours to ask reasons for obedience, or to present difficulties that may appear to lie in the way; but having the orders of our Commander, we should cheerfully obey them.

God's word contains the orders of our Great Captain. What it commands us to do, let us obey. If we go beyond what he has commanded, and introduce services of our own devising, we disobey God the same as though we had left his commands undone.

Once, after a battle the officers were collected in a tent, recounting the noble deeds done that day upon the battle field. Noble instances of courage and daring had been related, when an officer said, "I saw a more noble act still. A private soldier was engaged in a hand to hand

contest with an enemy. He had evidently gotten the better of his enemy, and had just raised his sword to slay him, when the trumpet sounded a retreat. he did not strike, but instantly retreated. And I hold that such prompt obedience of orders just at the moment of victory, was indeed a noble act. Then all united in declaring it a truly noble act. Nothing is more pleasing to officers than to have their soldiers obey them implicitly; and we feel that God is indeed well pleased when we thus obey him.

To illustrate this, let us look at an incident in the life of Saul, the king of Israel. The children of Israel were God's people, and God was their ruler. But God had placed Saul as king over them, and would now rule them through him; so it was the duty of Saul to obey God, and of the people to obey him.

Long before Saul's day, as Israel came up through the wilderness of Sinai, the Amalekites attacked them, and a severe battle was fought, in which Israel was victorious. But it appears that these Amalekites still hung upon the flanks and rear of the hosts of Israel in their marches, annoyed them all they possibly could, and cut off any stragglers from the main body. For this treatment of his people, God had devoted the entire Amalekite nation to destruction, and the work of destroying them, was committed to Saul. Samuel, the prophet of the Lord, came to Saul with God's command for him to do this work, which was in these words: "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and sucking, ox and sheep, camel and ass." I.

Sam. xv. 3. Saul went forth on his mission, and God prospered him; but he failed to obey the orders he had received. He spared the king of the Amalekites, and also the best of the sheep, and the oxen, fatlings and lambs; but every worthless animal he utterly destroyed. It is probable that Saul, elated with his victories, thought of a triumphal return to his people, and spared the king and these best of the spoil, to grace his triumph. Or perhaps he intended to take these good spoils for his own, and thus become rich. When good old Samuel came to him and inquired why t was he had not obeyed the command of his God, but had spared these sheep and oxen, he replied that they had been saved for a great sacrifice he intended to offer unto the Lord in Gilgal. The old prophet replied, (and mark his words,) "Hath the Lord

as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king." 1. Sam. xv. 22, 23. It has always appeared to me that Saul and the people of Israel thought best (in obeying God's direct command,) to use their own judgment and feelings. Probably they reasoned thus: These sheep are very nice; these oxen are sleek and fat; and what a pity to kill them all here. Surely we might save a few of the best as sacrifices to our God. God requires them to be slain, and we can take them to Gilgal and slay

them there as an offering unto the Lord. But God's command was very plain, and no such reason could justify them in breaking it. When God told them to utterly destroy, it mattered not what use they made of them, even though they devoted them as sacrifices in his worship, they displeased him. To obey was better than to sacrifice.

Men say of hymns, as the Israelites did of those cattle. They are nice, the language used is touching, the sentiments are good; let us use them in worshiping God. But stop first and see if that would be in accordance with the directions God has given us. We then turn to the Bible, and search from Genesis to Revelation, but find no command to men to make or use any human songs in singing God's praise. But we do find in the Bible a book of songs given by

God himself, exactly suited to our varied wants. We find commands to sing these. We find them sung with evident marks of God's approbation, used by his most faithful servants, even by his own dear Son. As soldiers of the Lord, bound to obey his commands, our duty then is plain.

“O come let us sing to the Lord:  
    Come let us every one,  
A joyful noise make to the Rock  
    Of our salvation,  
Let us before his presence come  
    With praise and thankful voice;  
Let us sing psalms to him with grace,  
    And make a joyful noise.”

—*Psalm xcvi. 1, 2.*



## CHAPTER XI.

### *TENTH EVENING.*

#### THE USE OF HYMNS.

Is it a sin to use them?—Will God accept them?  
—Majority of professing Christians use them  
—That does not make it right—Reasons why  
used by so many—Will the Psalms ever be  
universally used?—Reasons why we may ex-  
pect it.

Story—The drover's boy.

**J**OHN. As I have been thinking over what has been said in our talks, it seems to me that those who sing hymns are guilty of a great sin; in fact, it does seem as if they could not be good people.

*Mrs. M.* John! John! you must not say that. You are not to judge others

thus. Hymn singers may have correct views of the plan of salvation, may have true saving faith in Jesus Christ, may earnestly labor for the good of Christ's cause, may be very correct in other things; and if they do err in the matter of praise to God, it is not a vital point. We should strive to be correct in all things; yet no man is free from error, and an error in regard to what songs we are to use in God's praise, surely is not an error that makes it impossible for those guilty of it to be Christians.

*Willie.* But mother, will God accept the praise of those that use hymns? Will their worship be acceptable?

*Mrs. M.* All our worship is very imperfect, *very defective indeed*; and if God would accept none but perfect acts of worship, none would worship acceptably. But for Christ's sake, God accepts even

our feeble and imperfect services, and will accept the service rendered still more so by the use of songs composed by mere men. I, of course, mean that those who use hymns, believe that their use is right; because, if they believe it to be wrong to use them, and still use them, God will not accept their worship.

If, under the ceremonial law, a man had offered a diseased animal believing it to be perfectly sound and healthy, we believe that it would have been acceptable to God. But if he had known that it was diseased, and still offered it, God would have rejected it.

So persons who know no better, who think hymns are suitable matter for praise and offer them with right feelings, are acceptable worshipers. But persons who are led to see the beauty and suitability of the Psalms, and the commands of

God to use them in his worship, surely cannot worship him acceptably by casting these aside for mere human songs.

*Mary.* In our land to-day the great mass of Christians sing hymns. There are only a few small denominations that contend for the exclusive use of the Scripture Psalms. Why has the multitude gone astray on this point, while they have the Bible to guide them?

*Mrs. M.* We must not follow the multitude. At the flood, the multitude was drowned; when Sodom and Gomorrah were burnt up, the multitude perished in their overthrow; in both cases it was only a minority,—a mere remnant that was saved.

At the present time, look on our Southern states, and behold the evil of slavery existing there. Our church, and a few other small churches testify against

it as a sin; but the greater number of churches lift no voice against it. I feel it to be a sin, and I know you all have the same opinion. And I might ask why do churches, having the Bible as their guide, see no sin in slavery? And I might ask the same about their singing hymns. I admit that it is strange that a pure, scriptural psalmody, has not more advocates among the churches, but there are reasons which may account for it. Multitudes have been raised in hymn singing churches, and have never had the question of the propriety of their use presented to them. I have met and talked with many good Christian people, who assured me that I was the first person they ever heard advocating the use of Psalms as songs of praise. Many use hymns, and I believe they never have had the question of using Psalms presented to

them. Others know about the contest on this question, but feeling satisfied with the hymns, have never carefully examined the subject. Then, there are doubtless some, who, after an investigation of the subject, have decided in favor of hymns; but I feel convinced that the great mass of hymn singers have given little or no thought to the subject. When we bear this in mind, and think of the exciting character of the hymns, how they are composed to work upon the emotions and stir the feelings, and that they are much more easily understood than the Psalms, we need not wonder to see the masses of the people clinging to their use.

*John.* I would ask if we have reason to believe that it will be different in the future, and that the time will ever come

when the Psalms shall be used by all denominations of Christians?

*Mrs. M.* I firmly believe that time will come. I believe the Psalms of inspiration are the songs God designed to be used in his church to the end of time. I believe that we, in clinging to the Psalms, are right; and the right will triumph. In Heb. xii. 26, 27, we read of a shaking that is to be; and I think it refers to a shaking that shall yet be in the visible church. Every thing of error kind that can be shaken, shall be shaken out of the church, and I am much mistaken if certain hymns cannot be shaken considerably. But what cannot be shaken shall remain; and what is there that cannot be shaken except God's own word, his own songs of praise? Our present version of them may be shaken and pass

away; but the Psalms themselves will remain.

You may say that it does not at present look very much as if we should soon see all denominations using the Psalms in praise, because hymns are multiplying rapidly. The books used are changing as rapidly almost as the seasons, but I believe this very thing will hasten their downfall. Years ago, some of our sister churches used the Psalms to a good extent;—true, they had a few hymns which they used sometimes — but now the Psalms are entirely cast aside in those churches, and legions of hymns are struggling to usurp their place. What will be the effect of this? The truly pious will become dissatisfied with this constant change, for by it all attachment for the hymns is lost. The old man may think of the hymns he learned when a

boy; but he never hears them sung, as new hymns are all the rage now. The earnest workers in the church will long for hymns that will last,—that shall not soon be thrown aside, and will see that to have such, they must return to the Psalms. What is made principally to move our emotions will soon grow old and stale; hence, emotional hymns must be ever changing. That, I believe, is one reason why the Psalms have so little of the emotional in them. God intended them to serve as songs of praise down to the end of time.

Then, I think all denominations will return to the Psalms, because they are not sectarian. You take the hymn book of any denomination, and you will find their own views of certain doctrines presented. In the Presbyterian you will find Calvinism; in the Methodist, Ar-

minianism; in the Baptist, immersion; while sprinkling, and the baptism of infants are advocated by opposing sects in their books. Thus, all hymn books are sectarian; but our Bible hymn book is like the rest of the Bible, suitable to be used by all denominations. It seems strange to me to see persons singing a hymn that advocates a doctrine the very opposite of what they profess to believe, and yet I have often seen it.

We look for a millennium, a thousand years of peace and harmony in the church. We believe that during that long period, there will be no discord or strife over the question of psalmody, or the adoption of new hymn books. The beginning of the millennium will find the church furnished with a book of songs, which shall last until its close. And where shall we find a book that shall last

one thousand years? Judging from the rapid change of hymn books we have seen during the last twenty years, we can truly say it will be no book composed by men. It will be the Psalms of Scripture. These Psalms in some literal and suitable version, will be the hymn book of the millennium.

#### MR. MATHEWS' STORY.

WHEN I was a boy, we had not a very good market for grain and stock in this part of the country. In Philadelphia prices were much higher, and in New York city they were higher still. But how were we to get our grain and stock there? Grain was taken in wagons, and when the canal was finished, much of it was carried in boats; but stock was driven to those cities on foot. I remember

seeing drove after drove passing my father's house, destined for this eastern market. Some would be droves of horses, others cattle, others sheep or hogs, and I have also seen droves of turkeys.

A man named Martin often collected droves in our neighborhood, and being an old friend of my father's, was much at our house. One year he gathered in a part of a drove at father's, and started with it from there. He had been disappointed in securing a person to help him drive, and prevailed on my father to let me go with him that trip. I cannot tell you how very glad and happy I was at the prospect of such a journey. I was only a boy, and had never been any distance from home before. When I thought of taking a trip across our state, crossing the mountains and the Susquehanna river, seeing the beautiful city of Philadel-

phia, with its old state house where the Declaration of Independence was signed, and that old bell that rang out the glad news of a nation's birth. When I thought of the wonders of that city which I should behold, the different manufactories, and the ships of all nations at the wharf, I was perfectly wild with joy.

I cannot take time to describe the incidents of that trip; but I assure you that those days were happy days. I travelled on horseback, and I seemed to be moving amidst a world of wonders; especially was I most impressed by the beautiful scenery on the mountains. But, alas! I met with an accident, and failed to reach Philadelphia. We had just crossed a creek where the cattle had stopped to drink, and had experienced some difficulty in getting them started again, for the day was warm. I had dismounted,

and was in the midst of the drove, when a team running away with a heavy wagon attached to it, rushed into the drove. Many of the cattle were injured; four of them so badly as to be utterly unable to travel on with the drove, while one of them was unable to get upon its feet. I, being on foot in their midst, was knocked down by the rushing of the frightened cattle, and a large ox stepped upon one of my feet, injuring it badly. I was utterly unable to proceed, and was carried by Mr. Martin to a farm house not far away, to which the injured cattle were conveyed, and left under the farmer's care, until Mr. Martin and the rest of the men would go on to Philadelphia, dispose of the cattle and return. There I remained three weeks. In a couple of days I was so far recovered that I could

walk on crutches, and busied myself looking after the injured cattle. The family I was stopping with were very pious, and I thought very peculiar in many ways. What seemed to me a very nice thing, was the strict attention they paid to what was right. Whatever they believed to be right was done, no difference at what cost of labor or money; and what they believed to be wrong, was utterly avoided, no matter what the consequence might be. If there was any doubt as to its being right or wrong, the word of God was consulted, with which the father and mother were well acquainted, and its decision was regarded as final.

One day, as the children and I were working about the wounded cattle, a rough, ignorant looking man was looking on; and learning the circumstances of the case, said Mr. Martin had done fool-

ishly to care for the cattle; that other drovers would have driven on and left the wounded ones to die; that he would never be paid for his trouble and expense in caring for them. The children asked, Would it be right? The man advocated that it would, and I, that it would not. On our return to the house, they asked their mother's opinion. She took down the Bible, and turning to Prov. xii. 10, read, "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast; but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." Now, says she, if Mr. Martin is a righteous man, he would regard the life of his poor wounded ox, and not leave it to pine and die uncared for, by the roadside; but a wicked man in his cruelty would have passed on and left them weltering in their blood. The verse from the Bible settled the question in the minds of the children.

One monday morning, their hired man went to the neighboring town; and, as they needed meat, he was ordered to obtain some at the butcher's. At the dinner table he made the remark that the butcher told him the beef was killed on Sabbath evening. The father instantly replied, If I had been there, I would not have bought it; and I am sorry you took it. The man contended that there was no harm in buying the meat, that it was the butcher that had sinned; and that those who bought the meat were guiltless. In the discussion, God's word was referred to, and Deut. v. 14, read, "But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man servant, nor thy maid servant." And the father and mother clearly showed in their talk, that the

butcher from whom we buy our meat, or any person whose labor is of any use to us, is, in a certain sense, our servant. If he kills his meat on the Sabbath, and we buy that meat knowing such to have been the case, he has, to some extent, been working for us, and so far he was our *man servant*. True, we did not set him to work, but by buying his meat we encourage him to work, and thus are not guiltless. If no person, or even if no professor of religion would buy the meat killed on the Sabbath, there would soon be no butchering done on that day.

The children, and even the hired man yielded to the decision of God's word, and said that to buy such meat was wrong.

One evening I heard the children, when they returned from school, tell their mother about a little boy, whose father and

mother were dead, and who, having been taken in charge by a family in the district, had been sent to school; but, as is often the case, the other little boys had badly treated him, calling him *work-house boy*, *raggamuffin* and such names; and had refused to let him play with them. Johnnie, having a tender heart, felt this was not right, and had taken the little boy's part, which had subjected him also to the persecution of the other boys. The opinion of the mother was asked upon the case. God's word was consulted, and Ex. xxii. 22, 24, read, "Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless." Ps. x. 14. "Thou

art the helper of the fatherless." Ps. lxviii.  
5. "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation." She also read other passages about the fatherless. The feelings of the little ones were deeply touched, and they said whatever might be the result, they would be friends to this little orphan boy.

As that family did, so I would like my children to make God's word their guide. If in doubt about duty at any time, see if you cannot have your doubts removed, and duty made plain, by the teachings of God's word. Read it daily; read through your Bibles time after time. Commit its precious truths to memory, that they may be in your mind to guide you.

In regard to this matter of praise, seek what the Bible says upon it. Let the dif-

ficulty be decided by God's word. If we were asked to judge between two hymns, and tell which one was best, how would we decide? Would we not see which one was nearest the word of God? And if one was the very word of God itself, would we not give that one the preference? The Psalms are God's word, the songs he has given us to use in his praise; and in his word we find no command, or permission ever given to use any other songs. Let that settle the question for us.

“Sing loud to God our strength; with joy  
To Jacob's God do sing.  
Take up a psalm, the pleasant harp,  
Timbrel and psalt'ry bring.”

—*Psalm lxxxi. 1, 2.*



## CHAPTER XII.

### *ELEVENTH EVENING.*

#### CONCLUSION.

Why no more talks—The children's opinions  
—A little Psalm Book needed—What do very corrupt churches use in praise?—Are we led merely by a prejudice?

Story—Uncle Joshua Black.

MRS. M. On next Sabbath evening, there will be a missionary meeting in our church, which we will attend. Then, the following Sabbath is our communion, and, as our pastor will have another minister helping him, there will be preaching at night. And you know that the week following, our school will close, and the teacher will be gone

before the Sabbath comes again, so we will close our talks upon this subject to-night.

It appears to me best to hear what each one of you has to say about this matter we have been considering so long; and if there is any matter about which you desire to hear more, mention it. If any of you have any questions to ask, I would be glad to hear them. I guess we had best begin with Willie.

*Willie.* When it was first proposed to have these talks, I was sorry. I did not think I would like them, and I felt certain I would not understand them; but you explained it all so nicely, and father told such interesting stories, illustrating what was said, that I am glad you had them. I am sure I remember much that has been said, and I know that I now like the Psalms better than ever before. I

think I will commit more of them to memory, now that we have learned so much about them. I have one question to ask: Hymn-makers have made many hymns for children. While the men and women have big hymn books, the little children have their little books full of children's hymns. It seems to me that the book of Psalms is the book for men and women, and why did not God give a little book of songs for children?

*Mrs. M.* You might as well ask why did not God give us two Bibles, a big Bible for big folks, and a little one for little folks. God's Bible is suited for all ranks and conditions of men. Some parts of it are so plain and simple, that little children easily understand it. Such are the Gospels. Men try in vain to write lives of Christ that are more simple and easily understood, than his life

in the Gospels. So many other portions of the Bible are very plain and simple. So with the Psalms. Some of the Psalms are very plain and simple. They seem as if designed for children. Such is the first Psalm, which speaks of the good man. The 23rd is especially suitable to be used by children, and also the 34th, beginning at the eleventh verse.

“O children hither do ye come,  
And unto me give ear;  
I shall you teach to understand  
How ye the Lord should fear.”

So I might go on through the Psalms, and select many very suitable to be used by children. God has given us plenty of Psalms suitable for children, and all that is needed is to collect these into a little book by themselves, and we have a children’s Psalm book, and I believe

this will be done before long.\* Now Mary, what have you to say?

*Mary.* I feel sorry that to-night shall finish our conversations on this subject, as my interest in them is increasing. I never understood this question before. I thought our reason for the use of the Psalms, was because we believed they were better than hymns; but did not feel that it mattered much which were used. But now I see that the Psalms are songs which God has given and commanded us to use, and we are not free to lay them aside and use others. I was much impressed with the thought, "We praise God, and he knows better what matter we should use in his praise than we do.

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\* There is now in use in the church a little book containing over one hundred selections from the Psalms, suitable for children.

The matter he has given, is better suited for that work than any matter composed by us." It seems to me that argument ought to satisfy any one.

I have been thinking about the members of hymn singing churches around us, and I do not think they are as strict as members of our church. They are not so particular about keeping the Sabbath, attending church, or instructing their children. And I am certain they do not keep up family worship as regularly as the members of our church; because I have been all night at the houses of some, and have seen for myself. I want to ask if any church that is very corrupt in doctrine, sings Psalms?

*Mrs. M.* None, so far as I know. I have been told that the Roman Catholics use many of the Psalms in their forms of worship; but they are used in the Lat-

in language, and the people do not understand them. Universalists, Unitarians, and all such corrupt sects, have their hymns. I may also say without boasting, that psalm singing churches are noted for soundness in doctrine and holy living, and are everywhere champions of Sabbath observance, temperance, anti slavery, and all reforms that are genuine. John, what have you to tell us?

*John.* I can also say that I have been well pleased with our talks. I have heard so many people say: "O your singing Psalms is all a mere prejudice. Hymns are just as good, only you are all so bigoted that you will not admit it:" that I was beginning to conclude that it might be so, and that we were rather prejudiced or bigoted; but now I feel differently. I see we have good reason to cling to the Psalms, and I am determined to read

books on the subject, and learn more about it. I am also determined to learn more about the Psalms. I know they are called dark, and difficult to understand, but I am determined to try and understand them. I am certain that those who are not smart enough to understand the Psalms, are not smart enough to make other songs to use in their place. I have no special question to ask.

*Mrs. M.* I have often heard those who hold to the Psalms as songs of praise, accused of prejudice and bigotry, and have been accused of these myself; but I always felt that I was slandered by the accusation. I am conscious of no prejudice in the matter, and in using only the Psalms in praising God, I have acted conscientiously. I believe we have authority for the use of the Psalms, but none for making or using hymns; and

while I sing Psalms, something within me says, *you do right.* But if I would sing hymns, I would listen in vain for that approving voice. I know I am not the only one who is conscientious on this point. I know several members of hymn singing churches, who in public sing hymns, but in their families use only Psalms. One of these persons, a worthy lady, told me she never had sung a single line of a hymn in worship, that her conscience would not permit her to do so. Her decided choice was a psalm singing church; but her husband felt differently, and they lived far from any such church. The Psalms of Scripture were used in their family, and in the church she was silent.

Yet, in the opinion of many, all this is only prejudice and bigotry; there is

no principle under-lying it. I tell you I know there is principle here. People feel that in using Psalms they have a "Thus saith the Lord," while if they sang hymns, they look in vain for authority to justify the act.

## MR. MATHEWS' STORY.

As this will be our last talk upon this subject, I believe I will tell you about Uncle Joshua Black. Perhaps, John, you may remember him. He died when you were about six years old, his age being ninety-two. As long back as I knew him, the people called him Uncle Joshua. As he lived to such a great age, his wife had long preceded him to the other world, and he saw the grave close over the forms of several of his children.

I wish to tell you an incident that oc-

curred when he was in his ninetieth year. I was riding past our church, when I noticed an old man moving among the grave-stones. I watched him, and seeing him try several times to raise something which he could not lift, dismounted, and fastening my horse, went to his aid. I found the old man to be Uncle Joshua. There was one of those old fashioned, flat tomb-stones in that part of the yard, and when I came to him, he was seated upon that stone, his head bent upon his hands which rested on the top of his staff. I looked around and saw what he had been working at. A son had died many years before, and a tomb-stone had been placed at his grave. But the frosts of many winters had loosened it, and it had fallen down. He had prepared the hole to receive it, but had not the strength to raise it to its place. I said: Good even-

ing, Uncle Joshua! He started up, looked at me and said: John Mathews! Surely the Lord sent you here! You found me doing what Jacob did: "Worshiping, leaning on the top of my staff." I was praying to God; and asked that some person might come to my help, and here you are. I proceeded to set up the stone, the old man still seated there talking slowly to me. He said: Forty years ago I set up that stone. Then I lifted it into my wagon, and out, myself, and carried it in here, and set it up; but now I could not lift it up, when it had fallen down. My strength is almost gone. "The grasshopper is a burden." That is Tommy's grave. His death was a sore stroke, it cut deep; but that was long ago, the wound is all healed now. "The Lord gave, and the Lord took away; blessed be his name." I soon fixed the stone,

and sitting down by Uncle Joshua, listened to his talk, which was all about things of long ago, such as the old like to talk about. At length in his talk he spoke of Tommy, and the name seemed to recall what had brought him there. He arose and examined my work, and remarked: You have fixed it well, John. He then leaned his hand upon the stone, and pointing with his staff to a little vacant spot among the graves of his family, said: John, there is the spot where I expect to lie down to my last, long sleep. You see the sun is in the west, and is nearly down; so my sun is nearly set. I am standing upon the very brink of the grave. One foot is already in it, and the other clings to its very edge. Soon, very soon I shall lie there. He then stood a few minutes leaning upon the stone, lost in thought. I can never forget my feel-

ings; the grave yard, the sleeping dead around us, the aged man who had outlived his generation, his words, and also the setting sun, all moved my feelings strangely. At length he said, speaking slowly, John, my boy, you have nicely set up this stone, and I am obliged to you for it; And now, I am going to set up a stone. You know that once after a great victory over the Philistines, Samuel took a stone and set it up, and called it Ebenezer, saying: Hitherto hath the Lord helped us. My life has been a victory, a miracle of grace. And right here in this grave yard, this very evening, I shall set up my stone of help and inscribe on it, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped me." My strength has been wasted by the heat of ninety summers, and my locks whitened by the frosts of ninety winters. I was born in Ireland, in the county Tyrone,

in the parish of Lamfield, near the little town of Drunkqueen, and, like Timothy, I had a pious mother who early taught me to fear God. And looking back to-day, I cannot remember the time when I did not fear the Lord, and try to serve him. I would not give *my hope* of salvation for the wealth of a thousand worlds. I tell you, John, this world is vanity. Its gold and silver are dross, while God's truth is the pure gold. O what joy I have had reading God's word. I can say with the Psalmist,

“How sweet unto my taste, O Lord,  
Are all thy words of truth!  
Yea, I do find them sweeter far  
Than honey to my mouth.”

—*Ps. cxix. 103.*

Or, “Thy statutes have been my songs in

the house of my pilgrimage."—Ps. cxix. 54. And let me say, no part of the word has given me such comfort as the Psalms. A pious mother had me commit many of them to memory, and they are fresh and green in my memory to-day. And such have often been my songs in the night, even in the dark hours of affliction and trouble. Let me tell you that those Psalms are the songs for the Christian pilgrim. It grieves me to see so many protestant churches casting aside the Psalms and using hymns. When I see this, I think of the martyrs, especially the martyrs of Ireland, my native land. In that green isle, a battle was fought between Protestantism, and Roman Catholicism. Catholicism fought to keep the Bible out of the hands of the common people, and Protestantism fought to place an open Bible in every home. I believe the plan-

ner of the war, was the evil One himself: who feared God's Bible, and dreaded the effect of its being read by the people, but he failed. As he could not keep them from reading it, he has planned to keep them from singing it. He says: Sing anything only the songs God has given. It grieves me sore to see how many noble men and women, persons that would die before they would yield up the privilege of reading God's word in its purity, readily, and without a thought, yield up the privilege of singing it. If we are unwilling to surrender God's Bible, and take and study in its place one that man has prepared, although largely composed of the matter found in the Bible. Why should we so readily yield the God given songs, for the ones man has prepared, although there are much in those songs

that is drawn from the word of God? It seems to me, that to give up my Psalms would be yielding a part of the Bible, for the privilege of using which, my father suffered at the siege of Londonderry, and fought under the Prince of Orange, at the battle of Boyne. God has helped me. I am here to-day by his grace. That help has been given me through the word, —not merely through the reading, but through the singing of it.

That talk among the tombs, made a lasting impression upon me. And now children, our talks upon this subject are ended; and before many years my life shall be ended, and my generation shall have passed away. Soon the work of maintaining the church, shall be in your hands; and how will you treat the Psalms? Will you do as many have done in the past, cast them aside? I hope our talks

on this subject, may lead you to see the importance of the Psalms, and fill your heart with an ardent love for them.

The natural bridge in Virginia, is one that God has built; and we feel it to be more firm and lasting, than any that man could build.

So the songs God has made, and given to his church, will be found far to outlast any songs composed by man.

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