

REVIEW

OF

RALSTON'S INQUIRY

INTO

THE PROPRIETY OF USING

An Evangelical Psalmody in the Worship of God.

SECOND EDITION.

ENLARGED BY TWO ADDITIONAL CHAPTERS, EMBRACING A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF COL. 3: 16, 17, AND THE MODERN HISTORY OF PSALMODY.

✓ BY

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P R E F A C E .

AMONG the numerous and highly interesting predictions with regard to the future glory of Zion, it is foretold, that her "watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again the captivity of Zion." For the arrival of this period of joy and unanimity among the watchmen of Zion, the church has for ages been employed in making prayer and supplication before God. It still remains true, however, to some extent, that diversity of opinion prevails among the watchmen of Zion; and in some parts of religious worship, they cannot "lift up the voice together." And in no part of religious worship does this diversity more unhappily appear, than in the delightful exercise of celebrating God's praise. Some believe, that in this part of divine worship, we have no authority to use any other "psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs," than those which God has furnished in his word; while others maintain that we are at liberty to use those which have been composed by uninspired men, the matter of which they

have collected out of the Scriptures. It is easy to see, that such a difference in principle must exert a powerful influence in perpetuating division, and in preventing union in the church of God. To endeavor, in the use of all proper means, to remove this cause of division among brethren, is a solemn duty incumbent on all the followers of Jesus. As all division among brethren supposes that there is a fault somewhere, it should be the concern of every one to ascertain whether his principles and practice on this subject are conformable to the word of God. For on those who forsake, and not on those who hold fast the law and the testimony," must the fault of division lie.

My attention has recently been called to this subject, by a publication of the Rev. Dr. RALSTON, entitled, "An Inquiry into the Propriety of using an Evangelical Psalmody in the worship of God." The age and deserved reputation of this venerable Father, both for learning and piety, demand for his book a careful and candid examination. After having read the work, as I hope with something of the proper spirit, I find myself utterly unable to adopt the conclusions of my worthy Father. And as the "Inquiry" seems to have been designed more especially for the benefit of the Associate Reformed Church, I propose to present to the christian public, in the form of a REVIEW, my reasons for withholding my assent from the conclusions of the venerable author. For him, personally, I entertain profound respect. His argument, gener-

ally, seems to me to be utterly inconclusive; while some principles that he has advanced, I cannot but regard as of pernicious tendency. This I shall endeavor, with all plainness, to make appear; but at the same time, I trust that in the remarks which may be made, nothing shall be manifested which is inconsistent with that respect which is due to a hoary head, which is a crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness. That the reader may enjoy much of that spiritual illumination which is necessary to a proper understanding of the truth, is the prayer of

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE first edition of this treatise having been for some time past exhausted, and frequent applications being made for it, the Author has been induced to present to the public a second edition. Shortly after the publication of the work, a reply from the Author of the "Inquiry" made its appearance. In this reply, I have not been able to discover any thing in the way of argument, which renders it necessary for me to change a single position which I have taken. It has not, therefore, been thought necessary to notice this reply further than simply to advert to the argument of

the Author, in a critical analysis of Col. 3: 16, 17, which is added to the present edition. There is also added, a brief historical survey of psalmody from the apostolic age down to the V. century. From this survey, it is hoped, that it will appear to the satisfaction of the reader, that while it is true, that there was at an early period, a departure from what we regard as scripture rule on this subject, as well as many others; yet, it is true, that the Psalms which were given by inspiration of God, have always been used by his church, in the celebration of his praise; that in the times of the greatest purity of the church, these Psalms have been most highly prized; and that the principle which maintains, that they are not suitable to be employed in the worship of the church under the gospel dispensation, is a discovery of modern times.

Allegheny City, 1st April, 1848.

REVIEW, &c.

CHAPTER I.

IMPORTANCE of Regarding Divine Appointment in the Worship of God—Statement of the Question in Dispute.

“GIVE unto the Lord, the glory due unto his name ; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” What glory is due unto God, and what worship will be acceptable to him, we must learn, not from the discoveries of reason, but exclusively from the revelation which God has given of himself in the Oracles of Truth. That God should receive the religious homage of the intelligent creature, is a conclusion which recommends itself to our reason ; but in what particular way this religious homage should be expressed, reason cannot inform us. In all our inquiries, therefore, with respect to the worship which is proper to be offered to God, we must go directly to his word. “In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

Among the ordinances of religious worship which God has appointed, the singing of praise is one of peculiar interest to the pious soul. When the christian is enabled to lift up the soul with the voice, and praise God with the understanding and the heart, he

enjoys on earth a foretaste of heavenly blessedness ; and even now enters upon that delightful employment, which shall constitute the happiness of the redeemed before the throne of God. That, in the performance of this duty, the christian should be governed by the revealed will of God, must therefore, be a matter of great importance. "I am the Lord ; that is my name ; and my glory will I not give unto another, neither my praise to graven images." God claims as his prerogative, the honor of appointing that religious worship his intelligent creatures shall render to him. When men, therefore, take this matter into their own hands, and undertake to determine how God shall be praised, or with what he shall be praised, do they not plainly arrogate to themselves that glory which Jehovah declares he will not give to another ?

On this subject, the case of Nadab and Abihu is at once instructive and admonitory. These sons of Aaron took their censers, and put fire in them, and put incense thereon, and "offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not."* It was the business of the priest, in the discharge of his official duty, to burn incense before the Lord. In so far as the burning of the incense was concerned, common fire would answer the end as well as that which was kept alive on the altar. According to divine appointment, however, fire taken from the sacred altar, and none other, was to be employed for this purpose. But on this occasion, these presumptuous men, disregarding the divine appointment, employed common fire. And as a testimony of the divine displeasure against their presumption in thus contemning his

* Levit. 10 : 1.

authority, "there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord." In reference to this awful occurrence, "Moses said unto Aaron, 'This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.'"

From a superficial view, the conduct of these ministers of God, might seem to involve no remarkable criminality. Common fire possessing the same properties with the sacred fire which had originally descended from heaven, and was kept alive on the sacred altar, might seem to answer equally well the end proposed, which was to consume the incense and produce an agreeable perfume. But in this matter, human wisdom had nothing to do in determining what was fit and proper. In relation to every thing connected with the worship of God, it is our duty to inquire, what is the divine appointment? And because Nadab and Abihu disregarded the divine appointment, and offered unto God that which he commanded them not, therefore the consuming wrath of heaven descended upon them, and cut them off by a terrible death. And have we not reason to apprehend, that the disregard of divine authority in the worship of God, will now subject the guilty to the displeasure of heaven, as certainly as it did the presumptuous sons of Aaron? "The Lord thy God, is a consuming fire, even a jealous God."*

The application of this historical fact to the subject under discussion, is very apparent. In the case of these sons of Aaron, we have an example of the disregard of divine appointment in the worship of God, and of the awful displeasure of heaven to which their

* Deut. 4: 24.

presumption exposed them. And the things which were written aforetime, were written for our learning. By the fearful destruction which overtook these men, we are warned in relation to the danger of imitating their sin. It will not be supposed that God has less regard for the purity of his worship now, than he had in the days of Aaron. And though he is not confined to any particular mode of manifesting his displeasure against the corruption of his worship, yet that the sin is now as abhorrent in his sight as it ever was, and that it will be punished in the way which seems proper to Infinite Wisdom, there can be no reason to doubt.

That the singing of God's praise is an ordinance of religious worship, is admitted generally by all the professed followers of Christ. But on one point connected with the general subject, the christian world is unhappily divided; and that is, What system of songs shall be used by the church in the celebration of God's praise? In consequence of diversity of views on this subject, it sometimes happens, that professing christians, when they meet together, can most cordially unite in other exercises of religious worship; but in the delightful employment of singing God's praise, some can take no part; because they believe that the songs which are used, have not the sanction of the divine appointment. And therefore, however well their hearts may be tuned for the exercise, and however ardently they may desire to unite in praising God, they are compelled to remain silent, lest they should be chargeable with offering "strange fire before the Lord."

The conflicting views, on this subject, which have divided the christian world, may all be reduced to two. The first maintains, that the songs contained

in the book of Psalms, being given by inspiration of God, are to be used in singing his praise, and that we have no authority for the introduction of songs of human composure. The other contends, that evangelical hymns composed by uninspired men, not only may be sung in the worship of God, but that they are preferable to those contained in the book of Psalms, being better adapted to the Gospel dispensation. To a proper understanding of the merits of this controversy, it is a matter of much importance, that we should keep distinctly in view, the question at issue. The reader is therefore desired to observe, that the question is not, What metrical version of the Psalms may be used in the praise of God? But, it is simply this: "What system of songs may be used? Shall we use that collection contained in the book of Psalms; or may we use another, prepared by men?"

It is the more necessary to be particular in stating the point in dispute, because some writers, who at least ought to know better, give such a representation of it as is calculated to mislead. In the eighth volume of the *Biblical Repertory*, there is a notice of a tract on the subject of Catholic Communion, published by the author of these remarks. The learned conductors of that journal, do not condescend to answer the argument against Catholic Communion, but endeavor to turn it into ridicule. And no living men understand better than the "Princeton Reviewers," that it is a much easier task, to laugh at an argument, than to refute it. With regard to this tract these gentlemen are pleased to say,—it "will be found a rare example of exclusiveness, after the strictest sect." After making this *dignified* remark, they proceed to observe,—"One would think, at this period of the world's age and experience, that two bodies of

Presbyterians, having precisely the same Confession of Faith—and a form of worship exactly agreeing in all respects, save only a difference in the version of *Psalms*, which they employ, might freely commune together, without any unhallowed mixture, or any criminal abandonment of principle on either side.” And is it really so? A difference simply with regard to *the version of Psalms*, which shall be used! One really would have thought that, “at this period of the world’s age and experience,” men who, like the Princeton Reviewers, are in the very centre of literary light and of religious intelligence, would understand the difference between these two bodies, on the subject of Psalmody. With all due deference to these learned gentlemen, I must be permitted to say, the difference between the bodies of Presbyterians here referred to, is not, what “version of Psalms” shall be employed? No! It is a difference of unspeakably greater importance. The Associate Reformed Church, one of the Presbyterian bodies referred to, employs exclusively a version of the book of Psalms; while the General Assembly, the other Presbyterian body, employs that which is not, in any proper sense of the word, a version of the book of Psalms; and in addition to this, allows the use of the poetical compositions of uninspired men; which the Associate Reformed Church regards as a corruption of the worship of God. It is, then, a difference which involves, not simply the preference of one version before another, but a principle of great importance.

Let me then once more desire the reader to observe, that the controversy has not respect to the relative merits of different versions. But the question is simply this: Shall we, in the praise of God, employ the songs contained in the book of Psalms, which are the

productions of the Spirit of God? Or, shall we make use of the compositions of uninspired men? And one would be ready to suppose, that if men who reverence the Bible as the word of God, would look fairly at the point in dispute, no labored argument would be necessary to conduct them to the proper conclusion.

These general remarks being premised, I proceed to examine the "Inquiry into the Propriety of using an Evangelical Psalmody in the worship of God." And I must be permitted, in the outset, to observe, that the very title which the venerable author has prefixed to his book, has a tendency to produce an erroneous impression upon the mind of the reader, with regard to the real point in dispute. "An Inquiry into the Propriety of using an Evangelical Psalmody!" Why, my dear Father, such an inquiry is wholly unnecessary. No portion of the christian world, which uses any psalmody at all, would dispute the propriety of using an "Evangelical Psalmody." For the Associate Reformed Church, at least, I will answer, that she not only has no doubt as to the propriety of using an "Evangelical Psalmody," but that she actually does not, and will not use any other.

But what does the author mean by an "Evangelical Psalmody?" The phrase will probably be understood by most readers to signify a Psalmody, the matter of which is collected from the New Testament. And that the author intended that it should be understood in this sense, his own language would seem to make evident. After noticing the position, that we have no authority "to versify other portions of the Scriptures than the book of Psalms, to be sung in the churches," he observes,—“ We think, however, that we have both precept and precedent for doing so, and that our songs of praise are to be drawn from the New

'Testament in an especial manner." And then, after referring to Colos. 3 : 16, 17, he adds,—“No precept can be clearer or fuller to the point than this ; or that we are to draw our songs of praise to God, from ‘the word of Christ,’ or the New ‘Testament Scriptures.’” And to make the matter still more definite, after adverting to a different interpretation of the phrase, “the word of Christ,” he adds,—“We hesitate not to say, that there is not a man whose mind can rise above the prejudice of education and think and judge for himself, or who has not in view the support of a sinking cause, would give those words that interpretation, but understand by them, the *New Testament exclusively.*” This is pretty strong language ; and I shall have occasion hereafter to examine it carefully. My present object is, to ascertain precisely what our author means by an “Evangelical Psalmody,” or, as he elsewhere expresses it, a “Gospel Psalmody.” And I think we cannot be mistaken, when it is said that, by an “Evangelical Psalmody,” the author means a system of songs, the matter of which is taken from the New Testament. And as there is no collection of songs in the New Testament, of course a system of Psalmody drawn from the New Testament, must necessarily be a system of songs of “human composure,” no matter how faithfully these songs may exhibit the doctrines of the Gospel.

The principle, then, for which the venerable author pleads, is, that evangelical songs composed by uninspired men, may with propriety be sung in the social worship of God. To this principle I cannot subscribe. On the other hand, the principle for which I contend, is, that “it is the will of God that the sacred songs contained in the book of Psalms, be sung in his worship, both public and private, to the end of the

world;" and that we have no authority to use the productions of uninspired men.

It is hoped that the reader will now see precisely the point in dispute. And if he will lend me his patient attention, I will in some future chapters, at least, "show my opinion."

CHAPTER II.

Human Inventions and Human Composure.

In pleading the cause of the Songs of Zion, the great argument on which we rely, is, the divine appointment of them, to be used in singing God's praise; and our grand objection to the use of the evangelical compositions of uninspired men, is, that whatever other recommendations they may possess, they lack divine appointment. With regard to worshipping God, in the way which he himself has appointed, I am happy to find that we have the explicit testimony of the author of the "Inquiry." "The Church," he correctly observes, "cannot be pure, nor expect that the dews of divine grace will descend upon her, while she worships God in any other way, than that appointed in his word."

As this is a principle of very great importance at all times, and especially so at a time like the present, when there is so strong a disposition to make improvements in religion, as well as in the department of human science, the reader will allow me to add a few remarks to what has already been said.

To ancient Israel, the following direction with regard to the worship of God, was given by Jehovah himself: "An altar of earth, thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon, thy burnt-offerings and thy peace-offerings, thy sheep and thine oxen. And

if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone; for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it."* If human wisdom had been consulted with regard to this institution, many reasons could have been advanced to show the propriety of erecting an altar of a different kind from the one here described. It might have been said with much plausibility, that to set up an altar, of rough unpolished stone, would look very much like carelessness, in relation to religious worship; that it would seem to indicate an unwillingness to submit to any labor or expense in the service of God; and in appearance at least, would be disrespectful to the object of religious worship. And the wisdom of man would not hesitate to decide, that an altar of polished stone, neatly adjusted together by the skill of the artificer, would appear much more respectful to the Deity, and consequently would be more likely to prove acceptable to God. But, no! It does not belong to human wisdom to determine what is proper in the worship of God. This is exclusively the prerogative of him who is the object of religious worship; and his declaration is, *thou shalt not build it of hewn stone; for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.*

Take another illustration. Under the legal dispensation, some animals might be offered in sacrifice to God, while others were forbidden. Among those animals which might be presented upon the altar, the sheep and the goat are included, while swine are forbidden, as unclean. Suppose human reason had been required to pronounce its decision with regard to the propriety of this distinction. Arguments of a plausible character could readily have been produced, to

* Exodus 20 : 24, 25.

prove that the animals which are pronounced to be unclean, are no less suitable for sacrifice, than those which are allowed; and it might have been argued with much show of reason, that the flesh of the pig is in no respect inferior to that of the kid, and therefore, that it might with equal propriety occupy a place on the altar of God. The important difference, however, between these animals, is, that the use of the one was divinely appointed, while the use of the other was not. And hence, the offering of the one was acceptable, while the presentation of the other was an abomination in the sight of the Lord. The conclusion of the whole matter then, is, that in all our religious offerings, we must be prepared to answer the question, *Who hath required this at your hands?*

The controversy with regard to the propriety of using in the worship of God, the evangelical compositions of uninspired men, turns upon this point: Is there divine appointment for the use of them? These compositions may be adorned with all the beauties of style, decorated with all the graces of poetry; and what is still more valuable, the sentiments which they express, may be strictly in accordance with the sacred Scriptures. But none of these properties, nor all of them together, can render it proper that these compositions should be employed in the worship of God, unless divine appointment can be produced in their favor.

The venerable author of the "Inquiry," admits the principle, that divine appointment is necessary, to render our worship acceptable to God. And he maintains the position, that "we have both precept and precedent," for the use of evangelical hymns, composed by uninspired men. But before he enters directly on the defence of this position, he devotes a

chapter to the consideration of “human inventions” and “human composures.”

By “human inventions,” I suppose, any person acquainted with the English language, will understand such things as have been found out by the wisdom of man. But when these words are employed with reference to the worship of God, they convey an idea the opposite of divine appointment. Wherever men introduce into the worship of God, anything which is not divinely appointed,—or incorporate with divine ordinances, that which God has not instituted,—there we behold the introduction of “human inventions;” that is, we see something which man has found out, but which God has not appointed.

For the purpose of illustration, take the following example. It is universally admitted to be the divine appointment, that we should worship God in spirit and in truth. But some men contend that images or pictures of sacred things may be very helpful to raise the soul to the contemplation of those things which are above. Protestant Christians, however, reject all such helps to devotion, as “human inventions,” not appointed in the word of God.

Again: It is the ordinance of God that Christian baptism should be administered by the application of water to the body. But human wisdom has improved upon the divine appointment, by adding to the water, spittle, salt, and other things equally valuable! Those, however, who regard divine appointment as their rule in the worship of God, use water only in baptism, and reject all other additions of human folly, as coming under the head of “human inventions.”

And now, to apply these remarks to the subject under discussion, I would say, that if God has appointed the use of evangelical hymns composed by

uninspired men, then it is manifestly improper to represent the use of them as a "human invention." But on the other hand, if the use of them is not divinely appointed, then it is just as clear, that the propriety of using them, is something which has been found out by man,—or in other words, is a "human invention."

The words, "human inventions," are not restricted to the subject of Psalmody, but extend to every thing connected with the worship of God, which is not divinely appointed. The other phrase to which the author refers, and with which we are now more particularly concerned, is, "human composesures."

The definition which the author gives of these words is the following: "Human composure, properly speaking, is something, whether in prose or verse, composed by men, the subject-matter of which is human views, wishes, concerns or interests." With regard to this definition I would remark, that if the latter half of it were dropped, the remaining part would express the truth plainly and simply. "Human composure, is any thing composed by men." That is the plain truth. No matter what may be the "subject-matter" of a composition, nor the source whence the materials of which it is formed are drawn, if it has been composed by man, it is to all intents and purposes, a "human composure."

The author of the "Inquiry" observes—"It is not proper to call a poem, the ground and substance of which is some doctrine, precept, promise, &c. in the word of God, a 'human composure.'" And why, I would ask, is it not proper? If the poem, as such, is the production of man—if the matter of it has been collected and arranged by man in the exercise of his own understanding, judgment and imagination, no

matter from what source the materials of which it is composed may have been gathered—it is certain that, if plain language is to be understood according to its natural acceptation, it is a “human composure.” And why it should be improper to call such a poem by its proper name, I am utterly unable to conceive. The sentiments contained in the poem, if you please, may all be gathered from the Bible; but the poem itself is not in the Bible. The materials have been collected by man in the exercise of his own powers, and are so arranged by him as to form a poem, which expresses his views of what is contained in the word of God; and yet will it be gravely said, that it is not a “human composure!” In truth, a poem composed by man, and a “human composure,” are phrases, which if not tautological, certainly approximate so nearly to that character, that it would require very “acute logical powers” to detect the difference in their import.

But the venerable author proceeds to remark, that “it is the subject-matter of any composition, in prose or verse, that gives it its distinctive character.” True. But does “the subject-matter” of a composition determine who is the author by whom it was composed? A composition may be, as to its “distinctive character,” philosophical, political or religious, according to the nature of its “subject-matter.” Should a man in the exercise of his own powers, prepare a composition, no matter whether the design of it may be to illustrate and defend the principles of philosophy, of politics, or of the gospel, still it is a “human composure.” The materials of the composition in the one case, may be collected from an investigation of the phenomena of nature; or in the other case, they may be drawn from an examination of the Bible; but still it is in the one case, as really as in the other, a “human composure.”

And yet the venerable author repeats it, as though it were a thing which deserved special notice, that "it is not the circumstance of its being arranged and written by man, that makes it a human or divine composition, but what it contains." I would ask the honest reader, if this is not equivalent to the declaration, that it is not the circumstance of a poem being composed by man, which makes it man's composition.

The reader will perceive that the author of the "Inquiry" does not choose to appear before the public as the advocate of the use of songs of "human composure," in the worship of God. And to extricate himself from this difficulty, he has invented a convenient definition of the phrase, "human composure." He maintains that a composition, which has been written and arranged by man, provided the matter of it be taken from the Bible, is not a "human composure," but is "divine." And according to this definition, every evangelical sermon in the world, is a "divine" composition! and Dr. Ralston's "Brief Explication of the Principal Prophecies of Daniel and John," is a "divine" book! Against such an abuse of language, for the purpose of elevating the compositions of men to a level with the word of God, I enter my solemn protest.

If it were necessary to add any thing further, for the purpose of showing that this definition of our venerable author, is a modern discovery, the aid of which was found to be requisite to sustain a particular hypothesis, I might adduce the testimony of Dr. Watts himself. In giving the character of his hymns, this celebrated writer remarks,—“In the first part, I have borrowed the sense and much of the form of the song from some particular portions of Scripture. The second part consists of hymns, whose form is mere

human composure." * Though, as appears from his own statement, Watts himself placed a pretty high estimate on his hymns, he was not quite so extravagant as to consider them "*divine*" composures.

After having given his definition of the phrase, "human composure," our worthy author makes the following remark: "If it is unlawful to use in the public worship of God, a hymn or song written by man, provided it is founded upon and agreeable to his word, then Mr. Reid's lectures, sermons, and prayers, are all unlawful; for though they may be agreeable to the word of God, yet the language and arrangement are his own." † To this I reply, that with all deference to my venerable Father, I must be permitted to say, this reasoning is not valid. The things which are here compared, are dissimilar, and therefore the conclusion may be logical and correct in the one case, while in the other it does not hold. Preaching the gospel is one thing, and singing the praises of God, is another thing. And consequently, for aught that appears, it may be proper, in the one case, to do that which in the other, would not be proper. In the volume of Inspiration, God has provided a book of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs; and, therefore, in singing God's praise, we have no need to compose psalms and hymns, since there is furnished ready to our hands, a book containing every desirable variety of sacred songs, and one prepared by Infinite Wisdom. But there is no book of sermons in the Bible; and therefore, if [it is the appointment of God, that the

* Preface to Watts' Hymns.

† It may be proper to inform the reader, that throughout the "Inquiry," the author has a particular reference to a publication of the Rev. Robert Reid, of Erie, Pa.

minister of the gospel should preach sermons for the edification of the church, he must prepare them.

The reader will, therefore, readily perceive that it by no means follows, that because every minister of the gospel may compose his own sermon for the edification of his hearers, therefore he may compose a song, which he and they may sing to the praise of God. In both instances we must be governed by divine appointment. That it is the ordinance of God, that the minister of the gospel should preach the word; and that in the performance of this duty, he should speak the things which become sound doctrine, will be admitted by all. But that it is the will of God that the compositions of uninspired men should be employed in singing God's praise, the author of the "Inquiry" has not yet proved. And consequently, all reasoning founded on the assumption that the use of them is in conformity with divine appointment, is inconclusive.

The same general remarks will apply to the subject of prayer. But as this point will be particularly examined hereafter, it is not necessary that any thing further should be said at present.

But with a view to strengthen his position, that a composition which is founded upon the word of God, is divine, though it may have been written, or in other words, composed by man, the worthy Father adds a remark, which does appear to me somewhat startling. He says—"If it is unlawful to use in the public worship of God, a hymn or song written by man, provided it is founded upon and agreeable to the word of God, then every translation of the Scripture is human composition, and consequently, it is unlawful to use or read them in the public worship of God." Does not the venerable author here, confound things which are es-

entially distinct? A translation of a book, and the composition of a book, are surely things essentially different. In a translation, there is a rendering in one language, that which was written in another. In our translation of the sacred Scriptures, God as really speaks to his church now, in the English language, as he did anciently in the Hebrew and Greek. The translation is human, strictly and properly so; for it is the work of man. But it is not a "human composure." In a human composure, the object of the writer is to give his own views of the import of God's word. He collects and arranges his matter, so as to exhibit what he believes to be the truth taught in the Scriptures. But in a translation, that which an author has said in one language, is exhibited in another.

A human composition, then, though it may be strictly conformable to the word of God, is one thing—a translation of the Scriptures is an essentially different thing. The one may correspond with the word of God; but the other is, the WORD OF GOD. And in the name of the Protestant church of Christ, I protest against the principle which maintains that the one can with any propriety be elevated to a level with the other.

The author of the "Inquiry," in the next place, adverts to a custom of the Associate Reformed Church, according to which, explanatory remarks are sometimes made upon the psalm before it is sung, for the purpose of stirring up devotional feelings, and of preparing the worshippers to engage in praising God with suitable affections. And when the officiating minister makes some explanatory remarks on the psalm before it is sung by the congregation, our author gravely asks—"Do not he and they, virtually use 'human composure,' in the worship of God?" I answer

emphatically and unequivocally, No! And I must express my astonishment to hear a man of the author's age and knowledge ask the question. I have heard young men who do not understand the subject, but who would wish to throw some difficulty in the way of an opponent, ask questions of this character. But really I was not prepared to hear our venerable Father ask such a question, as though it involved any difficulty. Why, it is a perfectly plain and simple case, that the congregation of worshippers do not sing the explanation of the psalm which they may have heard. If appropriate remarks are made in explaining the psalm, the worshippers may be assisted thereby in praising God with the understanding and with the heart. But still, that which they sing in praising God, is no human explanation, but a SONG OF ZION.

When Dr. Ralston selects a text of scripture, and for the edification of his hearers, preaches to them an evangelical sermon, he does not expect them to receive his sermon, the object of which is to explain the text, as the word of God and the foundation of their faith. No! He teaches them to regard the text itself as the foundation of their faith and hope, and to use his exposition as a help to enable them to understand the meaning of the text, which is the word of God. In like manner, after a psalm has been explained for the edification of the worshippers, they use the explanation as a help to assist them in singing with the understanding. But they do not sing the explanation, which is given by man. They sing, literally and truly, a psalm or song which God has provided for the use of his church. And in doing this, they neither "virtually," nor in any other sense, sing "human composesures." And if the "apprehensions and perceptions" of any man are "so dull," that he cannot see that there is a

very important distinction between singing a divine psalm and a human explanation of it, in the worship of God, I would suppose that they are not likely to be sharpened by human power.

But to bring our remarks on the first chapter of the "Inquiry" to a close. The reader, it is hoped, will now clearly perceive the ground on which our author stands. He maintains the propriety of using in the worship of God, evangelical psalms and hymns and songs, which have been written or composed by men. He does indeed deny that such songs can with propriety be represented as "human composure." And in the support of this position, he gives a definition of "human composure," which amounts to this,—that a poem composed by man, if it be founded upon the word of God, is not a human composure. Though I must be permitted to say, that according to my understanding of language, this definition involves something nearly allied to a contradiction, yet whether it be correct or not, is a matter of little importance, in so far as the great principle involved in this controversy is concerned. The question is this: Have we authority to sing in the praise of God, songs composed by uninspired men, provided these songs are agreeable to the word of God? If the reader is disposed to give these songs their appropriate title, he may call them "human composures." But if he chooses, with our author, to call them "divine compositions," though they have been composed by uninspired men,—why, he may indulge his own taste. Still, the question remains to be settled,—Have we authority in the word of God, to employ such songs in the worship of God? Our author maintains that we have, and proceeds in the next chapter of the "Inquiry," to give the reader his reasons in support of his opinion. In our next chap-

er we propose to weigh these reasons in the balances of the sanctuary.

In the meantime, let me desire the reader to reflect that He who is the object of religious worship, is a Being who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity. It is, moreover, required of all who approach him in the exercise of religious worship, that they serve him in spirit and in truth. He will not accept the homage of those who honor him with their lips, while their heart is far from him. It is important then, not only that the matter of our offering, be such as God hath appointed, but that it be presented with a proper spirit. In our approach unto God, we may therefore well appropriate the prayer, "O, Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O, God, thou wilt not despise."

CHAPTER III.

Examination of the Author's Precept authorizing the Use of Songs composed by Uninspired Men.

The reader is desired to keep in remembrance the great point in dispute, in the controversy on Psalmody. It is simply this: Have we divine appointment for the use of psalms and hymns and songs, composed by uninspired men, in singing the praise of God? There is no dispute with regard to the duty of singing psalms and hymns and songs—but is it proper; or in other words, is it God's appointment, that we should sing those psalms and hymns and spiritual songs which have been composed by uninspired men? If divine appointment can be produced in their favor, then the question is settled, and controversy is at an end. But if divine appointment cannot be produced for the use of them, then it is clear that the use of them is unauthorized, and consequently improper. And in relation to this general principle, it gives me pleasure to repeat, that I have the concurrence of the venerable author of the "Inquiry." "The church," he observes, "cannot be pure while she worships God in any other way than that appointed in his word."

In the second chapter of the "Inquiry," the author with great propriety proceeds to inquire, whether "the church is warranted to draw her songs of praise to

God, from the New Testament, as well as from the Old.”

Let us endeavor to understand precisely the import of this inquiry: Has the church a warrant to draw her songs of praise from the New Testament? We all know, that in the New Testament there is no book of psalms and hymns and songs. If, then, the church has authority to draw her songs of praise to God from the New Testament, she must have authority to make or compose her songs of praise. The inquiry, then, resolves itself into this: Has the church now, authority to prepare or compose her own songs of praise? Or, which amounts precisely to the same thing, has the church authority to use psalms and hymns of human composure? The whole Bible is the word of God; and whether the materials of which her songs are composed, are to be drawn from the Old or from the New Testament, is not the matter in dispute. But the question is,—Has the church, with all the help which she can derive from the New Testament, authority to make or compose her own songs of praise? To this question the author of the “Inquiry” replies in the affirmative:—“We think that we have both precept and precedent for doing so, and that our songs of praise are to be drawn from the New Testament in an especial manner.” That is, in the opinion of the venerable author, there is “both precept and precedent” to warrant the church to prepare her own songs of praise, and that the matter of her songs should be “drawn from the New Testament in an especial manner.”

Where, then, is there to be found a precept in the word of God, authorizing the church to make or compose her songs of praise? The venerable author re-

plies,—“In Colossians 3: 16, 17, we have the following precept or command: ‘Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.’ ” In relation to the apostolic injunction, the venerable author observes, “No precept can be clearer or fuller to the point than this; or that we are to draw our songs of praise to God from the word of Christ, or the New Testament Scriptures.” No precept can be clearer or fuller to the point than this. What point? That we are to draw our songs from the New Testament,—that is, that we are to compose our songs of praise, drawing the matter of them from the New Testament? Why, my venerable Father, will you allow me to say, that this precept which you represent as so full and clear, does not utter one syllable in relation to the point in controversy. There is no dispute as to our obligation to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly; none, as to the duty of teaching and admonishing one another, as we may be able; none, as to the propriety of *singing* psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. All this is fully and clearly revealed, and all this we firmly believe. But what is now wanted, is a precept to authorize the church to compose her songs of praise to be used in the worship of God. And on this point, the precept to which we are referred, instead of being full and clear, is perfectly silent. All that we want, to settle the point in dispute forever, is, authority in the word of God for any uninspired man to compose psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, to be used in the worship of God. That it is our duty to *sing* psalms

and hymns and spiritual songs, we know. But where has God authorized any uninspired man, to *make* psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, to be employed in the worship of God? This is the point in dispute. And with regard to this matter, the precept which we are told is full and clear, says in reality nothing at all.

It would appear that it is on the phrase, "the word of Christ," in this direction which the apostle gives the Colossians, that our author chiefly relies for his proof that we have authority to draw our songs of praise from the New Testament. "The word of Christ," he understands as referring to the writings of the New Testament. He, however, notices a different interpretation, with regard to which, he makes the following remark: "But it is said that the *word of Christ* means the same thing as the word of God, or the whole of the Scriptures. Be it so; and it proves all that we desire to prove." The reader will perceive, that the words of the apostle furnish a very accommodating proof; for, according to our author, understand them as you will, and they still establish the point which he wishes to prove. But I repeat it, that the apostle is here directing the Colossians to *sing*, not to *make* psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. So that the great inconvenience under which this proof labors, is, that it says nothing at all in relation to the thing to be proved.

However, though our author seems in the first place kindly to admit that the phrase, *the word of Christ*, may mean the same thing with *the word of God*, or the whole of the Scriptures, yet he soon changes his tone. Hear him!

"We hesitate not to say, that there is not a man, whose mind can rise above the prejudice of education, and think and judge for himself, or who has not in

view the support of a sinking cause, would give these words that interpretation, but understand by them the New Testament exclusively." I am sorry to hear my venerable Father using language of this character. There is prevailing in this nineteenth century a disposition, at least, sufficiently strong to "rise above the prejudice of education;" and I do not like to hear the wisdom and experience of hoary hairs, employing language so soothing to this proud spirit. Has not the venerable author himself, often mourned over the evils which this very spirit has introduced into the great body of the Presbyterian church! Have we not seen men who, after being taught by their good mothers the wholesome doctrines of the Shorter Catechism, have, even before their beards were grown, conceived the idea of rising above "the prejudice of education;" and in the indulgence of this spirit, have rejected some of the great doctrines of Christianity as the relics of a barbarous age? There are other prejudices, from which the church has quite as much cause to apprehend danger, as from the prejudice of education.

At the hazard of being charged by my Father with the sin of having a mind which cannot rise above the prejudice of education, I feel constrained to question the soundness of his interpretation of the phrase, "the word of Christ." Let us then endeavor to understand the meaning of the apostle, keeping out of sight every "cause," whether it may be a "sinking" or a rising one, save the "cause" of truth.

1st. I remark in the first place, that by "the word of Christ," the apostle certainly does not mean the word which was spoken by our Lord personally. If we were thus to restrict the meaning of the phrase, it would comprehend but a small portion even of the

New Testament. And in regard to some things of importance, our Lord did not think proper to instruct his disciples during the period of his personal ministry. "I have yet," said he, "many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak."* That which has been revealed to the church by the Spirit of Christ, is just as truly the word of Christ, as that which was spoken by our Lord in person, and is of equal authority in the church.

2d. I remark, then, in the second place, that "the word of Christ" is that revelation which Jesus Christ, by his Spirit, has given to the church through the instrumentality of his servants. "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Jesus Christ is the Prophet of the church, and from him all the revelations of the will of God, which have been given to the church, have been derived. Under the gospel, "the word of Christ" was communicated to the church by the ministry of the apostles; and under the legal dispensation it was revealed by the ministry of the prophets. The word of Christ, it is true, has been more fully and clearly revealed under the gospel than it was under the law; and the truth relative to the way of life and salvation, has been more fully unfolded by the apostles, since the Comforter has been sent, than it was during the period of our Lord's personal ministry. But still, whatever may be the relative fulness and clearness of the revelation under different dispensations, it was "the word of Christ"

* John 16 : 12, 13.

which was revealed to the church of old by the ministry of the prophets, as truly as is the revelation given by the apostles in the New Testament. And hence we see the propriety of the apostle's declaration,—“Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”* And again: “The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”† It is then plainly the doctrine of the Bible, that the ancient prophets were under the influence of the Spirit of Christ as truly as were the apostles. The prophets spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, concerning the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, as well as the apostles. And consequently, that which was spoken by the prophets under the influence of the Spirit of Christ, has precisely the same claim to be regarded as “the word of Christ,” as that which was uttered by the apostles.

3d. I object to the author's interpretation of the phrase, “the word of Christ,” because it tends to exalt the authority of one part of the word of God, to the disparagement of another. If by “the word of Christ,” we are to understand “the New Testament exclusively,” then it would seem to follow, that the Old Testament is not “the word of Christ,” and therefore not of equal authority in the church. But while some do not hesitate to avow this pernicious sentiment, as my venerable Father well knows and firmly

* 1 Peter 1 : 10, 11.

† 2 Peter 1 : 21.

believes, the whole Bible is a revelation of the Spirit of Christ, by whom the prophets and apostles were inspired, and is the rule of our faith and life. While it is an indubitable truth, that the will of God respecting the way of salvation through Jesus Christ is more fully revealed in the New than in the Old Testament, it is no less true, that neither Testament is complete without the other. Neither of them can be explained, without the aid of the light which is reflected upon it by the other. The one is the introduction and partial development of a grand system, of which the other is the consummation. But they are alike the productions of the same glorious Author.

The interpretation, then, which would restrict the "word of Christ" to the "New Testament exclusively," I must be permitted to say, is indefensible. But grant that this is the correct interpretation, still the words of the apostle afford no proof in support of the point in dispute. The direction of the apostle is, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Let it be granted for the moment, that the meaning of the apostle is, "Let the New Testament dwell in you richly." What has this to do with the decision of the question whether every one has a right to compose psalms and hymns and songs, to be employed in the worship of God? It is undoubtedly the will of God, that the precious truths of the Gospel should dwell richly in the hearts of all true believers, and that they should sing "psalms and hymns and songs," in the worship of God. But we are inquiring after authority, not to *sing*, but to *make* psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. And on this point, this passage of the word of God is utterly silent. And yet strange to tell, this is the only text of Scripture which the venerable author produces to establish the position

that we have a "precept" to authorize us to draw our songs of praise from the New Testament. I must be permitted to express my surprise, as well as my disappointment, to find that the author devotes to the consideration of this all-important point in the controversy, only a few lines. We are inquiring for a divine precept, as our authority for composing psalms and hymns and songs, to be employed in the worship of God. The worthy author says we have a precept; and he refers us to a passage of Scripture in which we are directed to *sing* psalms and hymns, and then adds, "No precept can be clearer or fuller to the point than this." And yet it so happens, that the precept says nothing at all in relation to the particular "point" about which we are inquiring.

As it is believed that this passage of Scripture has perplexed the minds of some who may have paid more attention to the mere sound of words, than to the meaning of the apostle, the reader is desired to take up his Bible and read the chapter in which these words occur. It will at once be seen that the apostle is here exhorting christians generally, to the performance of various christian duties. "Set your affection on things above; mortify your members, which are upon the earth; put off the old man with his deeds; put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness; and let the peace of God rule in your hearts." These, it will be admitted, are duties incumbent on all christians, in whatever sphere of life they may move. And in immediate connection with the mention of these duties, the apostle gives the direction contained in the passage under consideration, in which he likewise exhorts to the performance of a duty common to all the followers of Christ: now what is the duty? Can any one seriously believe, that it is to write or compose

psalms and hymns? Why this is a task which not one in a thousand among christians has the capacity to perform. The talent and the acquirements necessary to enable one to compose a sacred song, are possessed by few. Even in the present age, when the advantages of education are much more generally difused than they were in apostolic times, the christian world can scarcely produce a man qualified to furnish the church with a tolerable version of the psalms contained in the Bible. Independent of the fact, then, that there is nothing here said about composing psalms and hymns, it is preposterous to suppose that the apostle exhorts the disciples of Christ generally, to perform as a duty, a work which is entirely beyond the capacity of the great body of the household of faith.

But the impropriety of the venerable author's interpretation of this passage will more clearly appear, when we shall have inquired a little more particularly into the import of some of the terms which the apostle employs. There is particular mention made of three kinds of sacred songs: "Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." It is natural to inquire, why are these different kinds of songs mentioned? From the nature of the apostle's exhortation, it is to be supposed that the Colossians would readily understand its import. They are exhorted to teach and admonish one another, "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Or, as the duty is expressed in a parallell passage, the exhortation is, "Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Now what would the apostle be understood by his brethren as referring to, when he speaks of "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs?" He refers to these sacred songs, as things with which his brethren were

familiar. Was there, then, any such thing in use among christians, with which it must be supposed that the members of the christian church were familiar? We know that there was. There was then a book of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, received by the church of Christ as a portion of the word of God. With this divine book, christians were familiar. And when the apostle exhorts christians to sing psalms, there is just the same reason to suppose that he would be understood as referring to those contained in the book of Psalms, as that when he speaks of the Scriptures, his brethren would understand him as referring to the sacred writings contained in the Bible.

But further: It is well known to the scholar, that there are various titles prefixed to the sacred poems contained in the book of Psalms. There are particularly three distinct titles used to designate these different compositions. For the sake of the common reader, I will give these titles in English characters. The whole book is called the book of *Tehillim*, or hymns. And the word is used in the singular number as the title of the 145th Psalm: "*A hymn of David.*" Many of these sacred songs bear the title, *Mizmor*, a psalm. And others have affixed to them the title, *Shir*, a song. Here then are three different kinds of songs in the book of Psalms, contained in the Bible: *Mizmorim*, *Tehillim*, *Shirim*, signifying psalms, hymns, songs. But the apostle wrote in the Greek language; and the translation of the Old Testament then used generally throughout the christian church, was that which is known by the title of the Septuagint, which is in the Greek language. Now it so happens that in this Greek translation of the book of psalms, we have in the titles prefixed to different psalms, the identical terms which are here employed

by the apostle: "Psalms, hymns and songs." We know that there was then received by the church, a book of psalms, hymns and songs, contained in the Bible. We know of none other. And the conclusion forces itself upon us, that the apostle, in directing his christian brethren to sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, refers to those with which they were acquainted, and which the whole christian church regarded as a portion of the word of God.

Let me then say in conclusion, with all due deference, that the venerable author has failed to produce a precept authorizing any uninspired man to compose psalms and hymns and songs, to be employed in the worship of God. And as the author admits that God should not be worshipped in any other way than that which he has appointed, the want of such a precept, is the great reason why we do not feel at liberty to use the compositions of men in singing the praise of God.

But the author contends that we have "precedent," as well as "precept," to warrant us "to draw our songs of praise from the New Testament;" that is, to compose our songs of praise, drawing the matter of them from the New Testament. In our next chapter we propose to examine his "precedents."

NOTE.—As this passage of Scripture, Col. 3: 16, 17, is regarded as containing authority for the use of songs of human composition, in the worship of God, if there is any such authority in the Bible, I shall at the close of this volume, devote a chapter to a thorough examination of it.

CHAPTER IV.

An Examination of the Author's "Precedents," authorizing the Use of an Uninspired Psalmody.

As one special object with me, in engaging in this controversy, is to endeavor, if possible, to have the point in dispute fairly and definitely brought before the view of the christian public, the reader's indulgence is craved, if there should be occasionally a little repetition.

Permit me then to repeat, that, regardless of subordinate differences of opinion, there are on the subject of Psalmody, two conflicting views. According to one view, we have authority to use in the worship of God, those songs only which he has given us in his word. According to the other, we are at liberty to employ evangelical songs, composed by uninspired men. It is the latter view of this subject which the venerable author of the "Inquiry" maintains. It is indeed true that the direct object of some of his remarks, is, to show the propriety of using other songs of Scripture besides those which are contained in the book of Psalms. But this is not the leading design of the "Inquiry;" nor does the author in practice confine himself to the use of those songs which are contained in the Bible. If this were all for which he contends, though I might have differed from him in opinion in some degree, I should never have thought it necessary

to write this Review. The grand design of the "Inquiry" is, to prove the propriety of using what the author calls a "Gospel Psalmody," in contradistinction from what he styles a "Jewish Psalmody." And in his own practice, he uses such songs as have been composed by uninspired men. The great question at issue, then, is plainly this: Have we authority to use in the worship of God, evangelical songs composed by uninspired men,—or have we not? The author of the "Inquiry" takes the affirmative, and pleads that we have both "precept and precedent," as our authority. To the examination of his "examples" or "precedents," we now proceed.

The first "precedents" to which the venerable author refers us, are, the songs of Mary and Zacharias. "In the first chapter of Luke," he observes, "we have two songs of praise to God, one by Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the other by Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, but which are not in the book of Psalms." The reader will please to keep in mind what it is, for which we want a "precedent." It is a "precedent" to prove that we may with propriety compose our songs of praise, drawing the matter of them from the New Testament. But what is the fact with regard to the examples to which we are referred? Have we here an example of an uninspired man composing a song of praise to be employed in the worship of God? Nothing like it! We here behold two individuals who, under a divine impulse, give expression to the gratitude of their hearts in a song of praise, "as the Spirit gave them utterance." And I would respectfully ask,—Did Mary and Zacharias draw their songs of praise from the New Testament? Why, so far from being drawn from it—that is, so far from being composed of materials gathered out of the New

Testament, these songs are a part of that sacred book.

These "precedents," I admit, clearly prove, that any individual who is "filled with the Holy Ghost," may give utterance to the sentiments of a grateful heart, in such terms as he may be directed by the Spirit of inspiration to employ. But what have such examples to do with the question at issue? We want a "precedent" which will warrant the conclusion, that an uninspired man may prepare songs of praise to be employed in the worship of God. But the "precedents" to which we are referred, are examples in which individuals, divinely inspired, spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. I would then appeal to every intelligent reader, while I say that such "precedents" give no authority whatever to any man not endowed with the Spirit of inspiration, to take upon himself the office of composing songs of praise to be employed in the worship of God, no matter whether he draw his materials from the New or from the Old Testament.

Though, for the purpose of giving all the force to the author's argument, which under the most favorable view can be claimed for it, and at the same time to show the inconclusiveness of his reasoning, I have, in conformity with his example, spoken of these devout effusions of Mary and Zacharias, as *songs*, yet, in reality they are not properly so denominated. These pious individuals were not engaged in singing praise to God. They are not represented as giving utterance to the emotions of a grateful heart in a song of praise. But deeply penetrated with a sense of the divine goodness and condescension, and prompted by the Holy Spirit they give expression to the joyful emotions of their hearts in appropriate language. Mary said, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my

spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior." And, "Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for he hath visited and redeemed his people." These are not songs of praise, and consequently have no bearing upon the question, whether an uninspired individual has authority to prepare a song of praise to be employed in the worship of God.

But there are other "precedents." The venerable author adds—"There are in the book of Revelation, three songs of praise to God, the first of which has been sung by the church—the second most probably—and the third will be sung." To this remark it might be sufficient to reply, as in the former case, that these "precedents" are of no avail in settling the point in dispute. We want authority to justify uninspired men in composing songs of praise to be employed in the worship of God. But do the "precedents" to which we are referred, furnish an example of any such thing? Nothing like it! The songs to which the venerable author calls our attention, were not composed by uninspired men, but are the productions of the Spirit of God. We call for authority to justify uninspired men in preparing songs of praise to be used in the worship of God, the matter of which is drawn from the New Testament; and the "precedents" to which we are referred, are songs of inspiration, not taken from the New Testament, but which constitute a portion of that divine volume. It will be admitted by all who regard the Bible as the word of God, that the songs which are recorded in the book of the Revelation are the productions of the Holy Spirit; or in other words, that John, who is the author of them, spake as he was moved by the divine Spirit. And no one, I suppose, will deny that he who is divinely

inspired, may give utterance to the emotions of a joyful heart in such a song of praise as may be communicated to him by the Holy Spirit. And thus much, it is admitted, these "precedents" fairly prove. But we want a "precedent" which may be pleaded by a man who can lay no claim to the Spirit of inspiration, to authorize him to prepare songs of praise to be employed in the worship of God. We call for an example which will warrant a man, without a divine commission, to perform such a service—to furnish the church with songs of praise to be employed in the worship of God. And with regard to such authority or warrant, these "precedents" say nothing.

As I certainly can have no motive to misrepresent my worthy Father, and as I hope that my object in this Review is not simply to endeavor to achieve a victory, but to defend what I regard as important truth, I would repeat, that one part of his design in referring to these "precedents," is, to show that there are songs in Scripture which are not contained in the book of Psalms. And the conclusion which he would draw from this undisputed fact, is, that the other Scripture songs may be employed in the worship of God with the same propriety as those which are found in the book of Psalms. The validity of this conclusion, we propose in due time to examine. But the great design of the author is to prove that we have authority to use in the worship of God, songs composed by uninspired men, the matter of which has been drawn from the Bible, and in an especial manner, from the New Testament. And, as I understand him, the leading object of his "precept and precedents," is to establish this position. If this is not his main design, I have misunderstood him, and will be corrected.

But how can there be any mistake with regard to this matter? No one will pretend that the three hundred and sixty-five hymns of Dr. Watts, or the greater number recently adopted by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church, are contained in either the Old or New Testament. All that their most sanguine admirers will plead for, is, that the matter of these hymns has been taken from the Scriptures. I suppose my venerable Father would hardly venture even thus far. For example—is the following verse of the first hymn of the second book drawn from the New Testament?

“God builds and guards the British throne,
And makes it gracious like his own;
Makes our successive princes kind,
And gives our dangers to the wind.”

Will our venerable Father cite the chapter and verse from which this hymn is drawn?

But the most that any will maintain, is, that the matter of these hymns has been taken from the Scriptures; the hymns themselves have been composed by uninspired men, who thus far have failed to show that the Head of the church ever gave them a commission to perform this service. And let it be particularly remarked, these hymns are not the word of God, but are a human exhibition of what is supposed to be taught in the word of God.

To satisfy the reader that I have not mistaken the author's design, I would call his attention to what is said in relation to the songs recorded in the book of the Revelation. “A question naturally presents itself here, the correct answer to which goes far, we think, in deciding the disputed point, whence we are to draw our songs of praise to God. The question is, where

did the church militant on earth, and the church triumphant in heaven, get the *subject-matter* of the preceding songs?" The reader is desired to notice particularly, that the question as propounded by my venerable Father, is not, where did the church get *these songs?* but, where did she get the "*subject-matter*" of these songs? The great point, then, for which the author contends, is not for the use of the songs of Scripture merely, but for the use of songs, the "*subject-matter*" of which is drawn from the Scriptures, and especially from the New Testament.

In reply to his own question, where did the church get the "*subject-matter*" of the songs referred to? the author gives the following answer: "Assuredly not from the book of Psalms; for Christ is no where represented in that book, as a Lamb slain, and redeeming his people by his blood; but from such expressions in the New Testament as these: 'We have redemption through his blood,'" &c. With the venerable author I cordially concur in opinion, that the "*correct answer*" to this question, will "go far in deciding the disputed point." I am even prepared to go further, and say, that the "*correct answer*" to this question, would completely terminate the controversy. But with all due deference, I must be permitted to doubt whether my Father has given the "*correct answer*." The question is, "where did the church get the *subject-matter* of the songs" contained in the book of the Revelation? I answer,—the *subject-matter* of these songs was taken neither from the Old Testament nor from the New; but the songs themselves were given to the church by the Holy Spirit, and are a part of the sacred volume. And I suppose that when the Holy Spirit is pleased to communicate to his church, by the ministry of one of his servants, a

song of praise to be employed in the worship of God, no one will deny that she may with propriety use it. But it is a very different thing for a man of his own accord, in the exercise of his own powers, to collect the "subject-matter" of a song from the Scriptures, and give it to the church to be employed in the worship of God. That the Holy Spirit may give to the church a song of praise, whenever in his infinite wisdom he shall think proper, we certainly have no disposition to deny. But when a fallible and erring man, not "moved by the Holy Ghost," undertakes to perform such a service, and thus, by implication at least, maintains that the psalms and hymns and songs of Infinite Wisdom are insufficient, we ask respectfully, "Who hath required this at your hands?" We call for divine authority.

Such then are the "precept and the precedents," which the venerable author furnishes, as authority to justify uninspired men in composing hymns and songs to be employed in the worship of God. And after examining them with care, and we hope with a desire to come to a correct conclusion, we are constrained to pronounce them entirely unsatisfactory. The great, and to us insuperable difficulty in the way of employing in the worship of God, "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," composed by uninspired men, is the want of divine authority. One plain precept on this subject, would remove all our difficulty. The author gives us what he calls a plain precept; but when we have examined it, we are disappointed in finding that instead of a precept to uninspired men, to *compose* psalms and hymns and songs to be employed in the worship of God, it is a direction to christians generally, in relation to *singing* with grace in their hearts to the Lord. The author in the next place produces

his "precedents." But here again we are disappointed. The "precedents" referred to, are examples of persons filled with the Spirit, who gave expression to the joy of their hearts in a song of praise, as the Spirit gave them utterance. We want a "precedent," which presents to our view an example of an uninspired person who, with divine approbation, prepared songs of praise to be employed by the church in the worship of God. It is not at all to the point, to refer us to such cases as those introduced by the author of the "Inquiry." They are examples of persons under the Spirit of inspiration expressing their gratitude to God in songs of praise. To those then who, though they lay no claim to inspiration, yet take upon themselves the office of preparing songs to be employed by the church in the worship of God, we are constrained to say, "Who hath required this at your hands?"

CHAPTER V.

An Examination of some of the Author's Statements, in which he uses Language scarcely Reconcilable with the Inspiration of the Book of Psalms.

The present subject of inquiry is, Has the church a right to employ the evangelical compositions of uninspired men, in the celebration of God's praise? Our venerable Father pleads, that in doing so, she has both "precept and precedent." Could the christian community be satisfied on this point, all difficulty would be removed, and controversy on the subject of Psalmody would be at an end. We have endeavored to examine with candor and impartiality, the "precept and precedents," which the author has brought forward, and we are constrained to say, that they are entirely unsatisfactory; that they do not in any degree remove the difficulty which lies in the way of the introduction of an uninspired Psalmody into the worship of God; and in so far as we are capable of understanding them, they leave the great point in dispute untouched. We call for a divine "precept," to authorize uninspired men to compose psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, to be employed in the worship of God; and the venerable author produces an apostolic direction addressed to christians generally, to promote their mutual edification by *singing* psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. We respectfully ask for an ex-

ample, approved of God, in which the church has employed the compositions of uninspired men in the celebration of divine praise; and we are directed to "precedents," in which individuals filled with the Holy Ghost, gave utterance to the gratitude of their hearts in a song of praise; and to examples in which the church celebrates the praise of her exalted King, in a song of inspiration. May we not then say, that if neither "precept nor precedents" more in point can be produced, the cause of an uninspired psalmody in the worship of God, is unsustainable?

In so far as the great point in controversy is concerned, we might here close our Review. There is, however, one thing which has forcibly struck our mind, in perusing the publications which have appeared in defence of the cause which the author has espoused. From the days of Dr. Watts, down to the present time, those who have written in defence of an uninspired psalmody, have generally, as it appears to me, advanced principles which strike at the inspiration of the Scriptures. And though I know that my worthy Father venerates and loves the Bible, and though I am sure that he would abhor the idea of intentionally offering disrespect to the word of God, yet he must exercise a little patience, while with all respect and yet with all plainness, I inquire whether he has not said some things on this subject, which are hardly reconcileable with the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures.

On page 213, the author employs the following language: "When we say that all that is typical and local in the Psalms, is not suited to Gospel worship and praise, we yet cheerfully and unhesitatingly say, that whatever is devotional and preceptive, is highly suited to the praises of God." The reader will ob-

serve, that according to the venerable author, there are portions of the Psalms "highly suited to the praises of God;" but there are other portions, "not suited to Gospel worship and praise." But are not these Psalms, the productions of the Holy Spirit? And are parts of them not suited to the end for which they were given? They are denominated by their divine author, Psalms, or songs of praise. In them the praises of God are set forth in such a manner as seemed proper to infinite wisdom. And shall man undertake to sit in judgment upon these divine hymns of praise, and say that some parts of them are highly suited to the praises of God, but other portions of them are not suited to the purpose of praising God now, under the Gospel dispensation? And how is the humble christian to know what parts of this divine book are suited to the purpose of praise? And where is the man who will take upon himself the responsible office, of saying to the worshippers of God, "*Here*, is a portion of this divine book, which you may properly sing; but *there*, is a part which is 'local and typical,' which is 'not suited to Gospel worship and praise.'" Is it with the word of God, that man will presume to take such liberty? Are not "the words of the Lord pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times?" Do not all who are taught of the Lord, say with one heart and with one voice, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth." "Thy word is very pure; therefore thy servant loveth it." And yet shall it be said that parts of this book are well suited to the end for which they were given, but other parts are not?

That we may see in a proper light the results to which such a principle naturally leads, let us for a

moment apply it to some particular Psalms. I suppose it will be admitted that there are verses of the 51st Psalm, "highly suited to the praises of God." "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." I suppose that the most determined opposers of what the venerable author styles a "Jewish Psalmody," would admit that such language would be very suitable for a christian worshipper. But in the very midst of these verses we find the following: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt-offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar." Here we have typical language, in which there is a direct reference to the ceremonies and sacrifices of the law. Now will any one presume to say that these verses are not suited to gospel "worship and praise?" Will any mortal man venture to say in relation to this divine Psalm, that there are verses of it "highly suited to the praises of God;" but there are others, which are "not suited to gospel worship and praise?" Will any one collect the suitable portions of this song of inspiration, and leave out the rest, and give the song which he has thus prepared in an improved form, to the church, to be sung in the praise of God, instead of that which is the production of infinite wisdom? Will any one do this, did I say? It has already been done. And it grieves me to think that my venerable Father should use language which would seem to countenance, what

I think must be regarded as a presumptuous undertaking. Dr. Watts, in his "Psalms of David imitated in the language of the New Testament," has omitted the parts which he considered unsuitable for "gospel worship and praise;" and in the 7th verse, instead of employing the language of inspiration, he not only departs from it, but introduces a testimony with regard to the insufficiency of the rites and ceremonies of the law. The verse in question, as rendered in our metrical version, reads thus :

"Do thou with hyssop sprinkle me,
I shall be cleansed so :
Yea, wash thou me, and then I shall
Be whiter than the snow."

But Watts gives us the following improvement :

"No bleeding bird, nor bleeding beast,
Nor hyssop branch, nor sprinkling priest,
Nor running brook, nor flood, nor sea,
Can wash the dismal stain away."

And to his improvement he subjoins the following note : "Since the Psalmist seems to refer to the branch of hyssop, sprinkling the blood of the bird, and the running water,—Lev. 14: 51,—I have here enlarged upon the insufficiency of all those rites, for the cleansing of sin, which is the leprosy of the soul." I will now appeal, not to the prejudices, but to the sober reflection of all God's people, who regard the words of the Lord as pure words, while I ask, Does not that man cast an unbecoming imputation upon the Spirit of infinite wisdom, who presumes to set aside the language and sentiment of inspiration, and introduce in their stead, something which he regards as more suit-

able? The language of the inspired Psalm presents to us a prayer addressed to God. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." But instead of a petition addressed to God for spiritual cleansing, Watts proposes to improve the original by turning it into a testimony in relation to the insufficiency of the rites of the law. It is not for the sprinkling of the priest, nor for the literal application of hyssop, that we are here taught by the Holy Spirit to pray. The language is manifestly figurative, and is just as suitable for the christian worshipper now, as it was for the believer in the days of David. And in employing the language of this petition now, those who are taught by the Spirit of God, use it in the very same sense in which it was employed from the beginning. We are here taught to praise God, by acknowledging our own sinfulness and our dependence on God for pardon of sin and purification from moral defilement; and by looking in the exercise of faith for spiritual cleansing through the blood of Jesus, applied by the Holy Spirit.

The unwarrantableness of the liberty thus taken with the word of God, will more clearly appear when it is considered that in another part of this very Psalm, the Holy Spirit has done in the way which he thought proper: the thing which Dr. Watts has done in this verse. "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offerings." Here is a divine testimony with regard to the insufficiency of the rites of the law. But this it seems was not sufficient. And Dr. Watts, in his improvement, has thought proper to introduce another testimony as to the insufficiency of the legal rites, where the Holy Spirit teaches us to look to God for spiritual cleansing.

And I ask again, is not this, to cast an unworthy reflection on the Spirit of inspiration?

The reader will please to observe, that the question is not, whether the sentiment contained in Watts' improvement is scriptural. It is doubtless the doctrine of the Bible, that the typical rites of the law could not make atonement for sin. They were not ordained for this purpose; and this was always understood by the church of God. But our objection is, that it was not the design of the Holy Spirit in this particular verse, to teach the sentiment contained in Watts' improvement. And by leaving out the petition addressed to God for spiritual cleansing, and putting in its stead a declaration with regard to the insufficiency of the rites of the law, does he not practically declare, that the work of God needs to be mended? Here is a divine song—a song which is confessedly the production of the Spirit—in which the praises of God are set forth in such language and sentiments, as the Spirit of infinite wisdom thought proper to employ. And yet man, who is “of yesterday and knows nothing,” presumes to make out of it an improved song for the use of the church, in which some portions of the inspired psalm are left out, as not suited to gospel worship and praise; and other portions are changed, as to him seemed proper.

I have thus referred to Watt's Psalms, for the purpose of illustrating the practical bearing of our author's remark, as I suppose we have here an exemplification of his principle. The principle is, that “all that is typical and local in the Psalms, is not suited to gospel worship and praise;” but there are other parts “highly suited to the praises of God.” And as the venerable author approves of and uses Watts' Psalms, I think he will consider it perfectly fair, to examine

the character and tendency of his principle, as it is exemplified by Watts. And I would again seriously ask the reader, is it not making free with the word of God? Is it not laying unhallowed hands upon that which is sacred, to take up a Psalm given by inspiration of God, and leave out parts of it as unsuited to gospel worship and praise, and change the meaning and design of other parts, and then give it to the church to be sung in the praise of God, instead of the songs of the Spirit? I protest against all ungenerous insinuations, with regard to the "proselyting effect" of what we write. I speak to those whose language is, "Thy word is very pure; therefore thy servant loveth it." I speak as to wise men: judge ye what I say.

Another example of the use of language on the part of the venerable author, which, I humbly conceive, tends to cast an unworthy reflection upon the Spirit of inspiration, is furnished by the application which he makes of the phrase, "a Judaizing christianity." On page 209, the author introduces the objection,— "The book of Psalms contains inspired songs; but hymns are the productions of uninspired men." With regard to this objection, he remarks—"This objection, as stated, is plausible, and by its plausibility has done more to unhinge the minds of well-meaning but weak persons, and to enlist them under the standard of a *Judaizing christianity*, than any thing else that has been said or written." And with my Father's permission, I will add, that this objection will exert a powerful influence on the minds of the *strong*, as well as the "*weak*," so long as there remains in the church of God, enlightened reverence for the divine word. But our present concern is with the phrase, "a Judaizing christianity." What then is the import of the phrase?

In apostolic days the church was greatly troubled with Judaizing teachers, whose object was to incorporate Judaism and Christianity into one system; and thus they preached another Gospel. "They taught the brethren, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." The error of the Judaizing teachers was fundamental, and subverted the Gospel. It taught men to place the institutions of the law in the room of the atonement of Christ, and to rely on them for acceptance with God, instead of founding all their hopes upon the sacrifice of Christ.

A Judaizing Christianity, then, I understand to be such a system as the Judaizing teachers of old endeavored to introduce, which is at variance with the Gospel. This, I suppose, is the sense in which all will understand it. And if the venerable author does not use it in this sense, I think we have ground to complain, that he has employed without explanation, an opprobrious phrase, which, according to its ordinary meaning, casts a severe reflection on his brethren.

Who are they, then, who are endeavoring "to enlist weak but well-meaning persons, under the standard of a Judaizing Christianity:" Not those who would incorporate the rites of Judaism with the institutions of the Gospel! Not those who would teach men to rely upon the sacrifices of the law, instead of the propitiation of Jesus Christ! But those who plead for the use of the psalms and hymns and spiritual songs which God has provided for his church, to the exclusion of the compositions of uninspired men. And is this not an unworthy imputation upon the word of God? Is it not virtually saying, that to use in the praise of God, the songs which he has himself provided, has a tendency to introduce a "Judaizing Christianity," a system at variance with the Gospel? I

appeal to the sober reflection, not of "the well-meaning but weak," but of the intelligent christian, who loves God's word and bows to its authority,—is not an indignity offered to the Spirit of inspiration, when the use of those sacred songs of which he is the author, is represented as having a tendency to promote a "Judaizing Christianity?"

The reader will please to observe, that I do not impute to my venerable Father, intentional disrespect to the word of God or to its author. Far from it! I believe that he reverences that word. But I am sorry that, in defence of the principle for which he contends, he finds it necessary to employ language which, according to its plain import, I must consider as inconsistent with a due regard for the Author of inspiration. If the use of the songs of inspiration in the worship of God, tends to promote the cause of a Judaizing Christianity, is not this virtually charging the word of God with a pernicious tendency? And when men have brought themselves to the conclusion, that the use of songs contained in the book of Psalms, tends to introduce a system subversive of the gospel, can they regard these songs as given by inspiration of God?

The reader is requested to attend to another remark of the venerable author, in relation to the book of Psalms, which does not seem to me to be consistent with that respect which is due to the productions of the Spirit of God. He observes,—page 203,—“We will add only on this point, that had the churches of the Reformation used the book of Psalms only, until this day, we would not have had any evidence that they are delivered from the dominant power of the Man of sin, as there is no Psalm in that collection which can be called, ‘the song of Moses and of the Lamb.’” If this remark is well founded, it would

appear that the book of Psalms, as a collection of divine songs, is very defective; and that those churches which confine themselves to the use of these Psalms, can have no evidence of their deliverance from the domination of the Man of sin. And yet it is certain that God himself is the author of this precious collection of songs. In them the church is taught by the Spirit of love, of grace and of truth, how to celebrate the praises of her God. This, moreover, is the only book of Psalms which God has given to his church. And yet, according to our venerable author, if the church had confined herself to the use of these songs which God has provided for her, she would have had no evidence of her deliverance from the dominant power of the Man of sin! And why? Because "there is no Psalm in that collection that can be called the song of Moses and of the Lamb." It would appear then, according to our author, that it cannot be known that the church is delivered from the power of the Man of sin, until she sings a song bearing the title, "the Song of Moses and of the Lamb." The book of Psalms is full of such matter of praise, as is contained in this song; but it is admitted that there is not in this collection, a Psalm which *is* called "the song of Moses and of the Lamb." Whether there are not many of the Psalms which, with propriety, *may* be called "the song of Moses and of the Lamb," according to the true import of that phrase, is another question. What then is to be done? If there is not in all the book of Psalms, one song which can with propriety be called "the song of Moses and of the Lamb," what is to be done to supply this deficiency? Dr. Watts has performed the important service, and has given to the church "the song of Moses and of the Lamb," in his collection of Hymns, Book 1st, Hymn

56 The reader will please to turn aside for a moment and examine it. The first verse is in the following words :

“We sing the glories of thy love ;
 We sound the dreadful name ;
 The christian church unites the songs
 Of Moses and the Lamb.”

Will the venerable author permit me, with all due respect, to ask the question, do you really believe that God ever appointed such a verse to be sung, as a part of “the song of Moses and of the Lamb?” Is it right for any man to presume to prefix the title, “the song of Moses and of the Lamb,” to such a verse?

But let us proceed in the examination of this hymn. The last two verses are the following :

“Great Babylon, that rules the earth,
 Drunk with the martyrs’ blood ;
 Her crimes shall speedily awake
 The fury of our God.
 The cup of wrath is ready mixed,
 And she must drink the dregs :
 Strong is the Lord, her sovereign Judge,
 And shall fulfil the plagues.”

If the reader will compare these verses with the inspired “song of Moses and of the Lamb,” the contents of which are recorded in the 15th chapter of the Revelation, he will see that they must be set down under the head of human improvements. Watts’ “song of Moses and of the Lamb,” contains five verses. Three out of the five are not found in the song recorded in the Revelation. The other two leave out a very important clause of the song : “All nations shall come and worship before thee.” Whether these words were passed over, as not suited, in the judgment of

the author, to Gospel worship and praise, it is not my province to determine.

I would then ask again, seriously and respectfully, Is not an unworthy reflection cast upon the Author of inspiration, by receiving such a hymn, as "the song of Moses and of the Lamb?"

The reader is now requested to examine this song of Moses and of the Lamb, as recorded by the pen of inspiration, and compare it with many of the divine songs contained in the book of Psalms, that he may see how exact is the coincidence between them, both in language and in sentiment. "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest." Such is the song of Moses and of the Lamb, as contained in the book of the Revelation. And it cannot be necessary for me to inform those who are in any degree familiar with the Bible, that the book of Psalms abounds with such language and such ascriptions of praise to God. Compare with the language of this song, the following examples, selected from a multitude which may be found in the book of Psalms: "Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders and the judgments of his mouth." "He is the Lord our God: his judgments are in all the earth." * "Zion heard and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced, because of thy judgments, O Lord! Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto thy works. All nations whom thou hast made, shall come

* Psalm 105 : 5, 7.

and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name. For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone.”*

The reader will please to observe, that in these and similar examples which abound in the book of Psalms we have not only the sentiments, but to a remarkable extent, the identical expressions contained in the song of Moses and of the Lamb. And I would respectfully ask the author of the “Inquiry,” why are not the divine songs contained in the book of Psalms exactly adapted to the circumstances of the church, when called to celebrate the deliverance which God had wrought for her, since they employ the very language, as well as the sentiments, embraced in that song which she is represented as singing?

But it seems not a little remarkable, that an author so well informed, should attempt to build an argument of such importance upon figurative language, the precise import of which it may be difficult, if not impossible to determine. As he well knows, symbolical language is employed generally throughout the book of the Revelation. Whatever may be the precise reason for the peculiar designation of this song, “the song of Moses and of the Lamb,” it will I suppose be admitted on all hands, that the language is figurative. The venerable author might then with the same propriety argue, that we can have no evidence of the deliverance of the church from the dominant power of the Man of sin, until she is seen standing on a sea of glass, having the harps of God, while celebrating his praise, as to say that we could have no evidence of such a deliverance, until the church actually sings a song bearing the literal title, “the song of Moses and

* Psalm 86 : 8—10.

of the Lamb." In truth, if any argument bearing upon the subject of Psalmody, can be drawn legitimately from this scriptural fact, it is entirely in our favor. The church here under the glories of the Gospel dispensation is represented as celebrating the praise of her exalted King in the very language employed by the church under the former dispensation. And as the church of God is one, under every dispensation,—as she has always had one and the same Lord and King,—those songs in which the Holy Spirit formerly taught the church to celebrate the praises of her God and Savior, will always be appropriate. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, and so is his praise.

Another example of the use of what I must regard as improper language with regard to the book of Psalms, and which has a tendency to produce the impression that some of these sacred songs are not suited to the purpose for which they were given, is furnished by the author, when he speaks of certain "parts of the book of Psalms, which are typical." "It is," he observes, "something like an insult to the human understanding, in this age of the world, to say that those parts of the book of Psalms which are typical, are as well suited for praising God, as various portions of the New Testament. It is saying, that the type is as clear as the thing typified." But, he adds, "It is well known that every thing under the Jewish dispensation, is called the shadow of good things to come." According to our author, then, it would seem to follow, that as "parts of the book of Psalms are "typical," these have vanished away since the substance has appeared; and consequently, such Psalms are no more proper to be used by the church of God now, than the types and ceremonies of the law!

To such reasoning I would reply, that granting the premises to be correct, the conclusion would follow. If any of the Psalms, or parts of them, are among the types of the legal dispensation, then, beyond controversy, they have vanished away with the rest of those rites which were the shadow of good things to come. But is it true that any of the Psalms, or parts of them, are types? Is it consistent with the word of God to represent the Psalms, or parts of them, as being included among those typical things under the Jewish dispensation, which are called "the shadow of things to come?" Typical expressions are doubtless frequently employed in these divine songs; but the Psalms are not types. Language abounds in the book of Psalms, which conveys an allusion to the rites and ceremonies of the law, but will any one pretend to say, that any of the Psalms themselves are among "the shadows of good things to come?"

With all due respect for the venerable author, I must be permitted to say that, in this instance, there is a strange confounding of things essentially distinct. Types and typical expressions are regarded as the same thing, whereas there is between them an obvious and important distinction. After the types have vanished away, and those typical institutions which were the shadow of good things to come, have no longer a place among the ordinances of the church, typical language, which conveys an allusion to them, may properly be used. And accordingly, even in the New Testament, typical language is often employed in communicating instruction with regard to the worship of God. A pertinent example is furnished by a passage of Scripture, which the author himself has introduced, and which he seems to think it strange that we have not already noticed: "Having boldness to enter into

the *holiest* by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the *vail*, that is to say, his flesh; and having an *high priest* over the House of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our *bodies washed* with pure water." In this single portion of the New Testament we have a variety of typical expressions. Christians are represented as enjoying the privilege of entering into the *holiest*; as entering through *the veil*, which separated the holy place from the holy of holies; as having a *high priest* over the house of God; and they are exhorted to draw near, with *bodies washed with pure water*. Here then we have typical language; but no one who understands what he says, will maintain that the apostle employs types which are "a shadow of good things to come." If then it is valid reasoning to say that, because in some of the Psalms we find typical expressions, therefore they are not suited to Gospel worship and praise, for the very same reason some parts of the New Testament are not suited to Gospel worship and praise, because they employ typical language! And hence we would be brought to the conclusion, that this passage of the epistle to the Hebrews, which our author considers explanatory of the 66th Psalm, and which, if correctly versified, he thinks might be sung more to edification than that Psalm, would itself need an explanation before it would be adapted to Gospel worship and praise.

The truth is, that while no one ever thought of denying that the plan of redemption is more clearly and fully developed in the New than it is in the Old Testament, it is just as true, that much that is contained in the former would be unintelligible, without the aid

of the light which is reflected upon it by the latter. And as the way of access to God for sinful man has always been the same, the language which was proper for the church in celebrating the praise of God formerly, will be as well adapted to that purpose to the end of time, as it was in the beginning. When the true worshipper, under the legal dispensation, approached God with such language as occurs in the 66th Psalm, "I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams; I will offer bullocks with goats;" what meaning did he attach to such language? Did he expect to find acceptance with God, through such animal sacrifices? Most assuredly he did not. By faith he looked beyond these types, to the great Sacrifice which they represented. That same divine Spirit which put such expressions in his mouth while praising God, taught him likewise the insufficiency of these rites, and instructed him to say, "Sacrifice and offering, thou didst not desire; burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required." The spiritual worshipper under the law, looked for acceptance with God, not through the rites and ceremonies of the legal dispensation, but through that divine propitiation for sin which they all prefigured. Since then the great object of the believer's faith, under every dispensation, is the same; and since the typical expressions contained in the ancient songs of the church, were from the beginning understood in a figurative sense, as referring to Him who is the way, the truth, and the life; are they not as well adapted to the edification of the church now, as they were in the beginning? In their spiritual meaning, they signify the same thing now as they did formerly; and with the help of the light derived from the New Testament, they are now even more intelligible than they were

formerly. And consequently, if the Psalms which contain the typical expressions, were adapted to the edification of the church under the legal dispensation, much more may they promote the edification of the church now, since with the aid of the light of the Gospel, they may be better understood.

CHAPTER VI.

Divine Appointment of the Book of Psalms to be used in the
Worship of God.

Having examined the author's "precept and precedents," in support of his principle that we have authority to use the compositions of uninspired men, in the worship of God; and having shown, as we hope to the satisfaction of the reader, that his position is unsustained, it is now proposed to consider the claims of the songs of inspiration. It may be proper here to remark, that among those who are the advocates of the exclusive use of an inspired Psalmody, there is some little diversity of opinion. By some it is maintained, that the songs contained in the book of Psalms, were designed to be permanently used in the worship of God, to the exclusion of all others. By others it is supposed, that any song contained in the Bible may with propriety be employed in the celebration of God's praise. While I decidedly concur with those who plead for the exclusive use of the book of Psalms, I do not think that this diversity of opinion should give rise to any difficulty in the church of God. Where there is agreement in relation to the great principle, that an inspired Psalmody only is to be used, to the exclusion of the compositions of men, which give human views of divine truth, there need not I think be any difficulty on this subject among brethren. And

it is believed that if men were willing to confine themselves to the use of the songs of Scripture, there would be little disposition to go beyond the book of Psalms.

It is now taken for granted—because it is admitted by all who are concerned in the present discussion—that the singing of God's praise, is an ordinance of religious worship. To sing Psalms to the praise of God is recognized as a duty in every part of the sacred Scriptures. If then it is the duty of the church to sing psalms, we must suppose either that he has provided psalms or songs for the use of the church, or that he has given directions to the church to prepare a system of songs for this purpose. Having examined what our author has to say in support of the principle, that the church has authority to prepare her songs of praise, and believing that he has failed to establish this principle from Scripture, I now proceed to show that God has made such provision for his church, as to his infinite wisdom seemed proper; and therefore, that the church has authority to use those songs only, which God has provided in his word.

In pleading for the use of the sacred songs contained in the book of Psalms, my principal argument is drawn from—1. The divine appointment of these songs to be employed in the praise of God. If it can be made to appear to the satisfaction of the reader, that the songs contained in the book of Psalms were given to the church to be used in celebrating the praise of God, it will then be admitted that the point in dispute is settled; for with all who receive the Bible as the rule of faith, it is a received principle, that in the worship of God, divine appointment is our guide. What evidence, then, have we, that the psalms and hymns and songs contained in the book of Psalms,

were appointed by God, to be used in the celebration of his praise?

The divine inspiration of the book of Psalms, will be admitted by all who are interested in the present discussion. Though it must be confessed that language is sometimes employed by those who plead for what our author styles a "Gospel Psalmody," in relation to those divine songs contained in the book of Psalms, which is utterly inconsistent with the reverence which is due to the word of God, and which would seem to indicate, that in reality they are regarded as the productions of mere human genius. They who denominate some of these sacred hymns "cursing psalms," and represent the Psalmist as giving vent to feelings of malevolence towards his personal enemies, surely do not regard him as one by whose mouth the Holy Ghost spake. But however incautiously and irreverently some men may have spoken of these divine songs, yet all who believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures, will admit that the book of Psalms is the word of God, and is, in common with other parts of the Bible, the rule of faith and practice. But while the book of Psalms is a revelation from God, and is, in common with the rest of the lively Oracles, profitable for instruction in righteousness, it is profitable especially as containing matter adapted to a particular purpose. In this book, the high praises of our God are celebrated by the divine Spirit, who "searcheth all things; yea, the deep things of God;" and therefore, these songs are profitable to the church especially, for the purpose of praising God, which is an end to which some other parts of divine revelation are not adapted. Every thing contained in the sacred volume is useful to the church of God; but some portions of the word of revelation are more appropriate to one purpose,

while others are more especially adapted to another. And the book of Psalms is adapted to the edification of the church of God, especially as furnishing matter suitable to be employed in singing God's praise. That these songs were given to the church to be sung in the worship of God, is evident from the peculiar character of their matter; the titles by which the Holy Ghost designates them, and from the use which was originally made of them by the church of God.

The matter of these divine songs is peculiar, and indicates the particular end for which they were intended. Here, the glory of Jehovah is celebrated in the sublimest strains of Eastern poetry, as displayed in the works of creation and of redemption; and the church is furnished with suitable matter for praising God, for his goodness, wisdom, power, love and mercy manifested in the salvation of man, the preservation of the church, and the government of the world. As, then, the peculiar character of the contents of any composition, manifests the end for which it was intended; as from its matter, we know that one composition is a political essay; another, is a philosophical speculation; and a third, is a biographical sketch of some distinguished individual; so from the matter of the book of Psalms, we learn that its peculiar design is the celebration of God's praise, and that it was given to the church to be employed peculiarly for that purpose. "Praise ye the Lord; for it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely." These divine songs abound with ascriptions of praise to God, and with urgent calls addressed not only to the church in her collective capacity, but to all classes of men, to engage in this delightful exercise:—"Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem! praise thy God, O Zion!" "Let every thing that hath breath, praise the Lord."

The titles which the Holy Spirit has employed to designate these divine hymns, indicate the particular use for which they were intended. The reader will please to remember what has been said in a preceding chapter, on the words of the Apostle, when he exhorts the church to engage in the duty of singing "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." It is believed that no interpretation of the Apostle's language can be sustained, which does not proceed upon the principle, that there is a reference to the different songs contained in the book of Psalms. And this being admitted, it will follow, that we have an explicit divine direction to employ these songs in the worship of God. But independent of this consideration, it is undeniable, that the Holy Spirit appropriates to this collection of sacred songs, the title, "the book of Psalms," or songs of praise. By this title they are referred to repeatedly in the New Testament. For example, our Lord, when speaking with reference to this portion of divine revelation, says, "David himself saith in the book of Psalms."* And in accordance with this, is the language of the Apostle Peter: "It is written in the book of Psalms."† The word "psalm," is of Greek derivation, and comes from a word which signifies to sing. Psalms, then, are songs which are to be sung. And by giving to this collection of sacred songs, the title of the book of Psalms, the Holy Spirit recognized them as songs of praise to be sung in the worship of God.

That these songs were originally used by the church in singing the praise of God, is a matter of historical record. On this point, we may hereafter be more particular.

* Luke 20 : 42.

† Acts 1 : 20.

Since, then, the book of Psalms is a collection of songs given to the church by the Holy Spirit, the matter of which indicates, that their peculiar design, is to set forth the praise of God; since the Holy Spirit has designated this collection, "the book of Psalms," or a book of songs of praise; since they are denominated, "the songs of Zion," and "the songs of the Lord;" and since we learn from the sacred Scriptures, that these songs were used by the church of God, with divine approbation; therefore, we conclude, that these songs were given to the church by her glorious King, to be employed in singing God's praise.

That the force of the argument in favor of the divine appointment of the book of Psalms, to be employed in the worship of God, may more clearly appear, it may be of advantage, in this connection, to review briefly, the history of this part of religious worship, as it may be deduced from the sacred Scriptures.

In the primitive ages of the world, the worship of the Deity, it would appear, consisted chiefly in prayer, in connection with the offering of sacrifice. There is no evidence furnished by any thing contained in the sacred history, that the singing of God's praise formed any part of the regular worship of God. The first example recorded in the Bible, in which the people of God are represented as engaged in a social capacity, in this exercise of religious worship, is on the occasion of that signal display of the divine power and goodness, manifested in the deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea, while their Egyptian adversaries experienced a terrible overthrow. "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord; for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath

he thrown into the sea.” On a subsequent occasion, Deborah, a prophetess, furnished a song commemorative of the divine goodness in delivering Israel from the yoke of Jabin, the king of Canaan: “Then sang Deborah and Barak, the son of Abinoam, on that day, saying, Praise the Lord for the avenging of Israel.” At that time, there had not yet been provided a book of Psalms, containing a collection of songs, adapted to the diversified circumstances of God’s people. Nor have we any evidence that the singing of God’s praise constituted any part of the stated worship of Jehovah; but when the circumstances of divine providence called for a public expression of gratitude to God, some individual was raised up, who, under the direction of the Spirit of God, furnished a song suited to the occasion.

At least as early as the days of Samuel, there were established in the Hebrew Commonwealth, Schools of the Prophets. These Seminaries of sacred learning were under the superintendence of some distinguished Prophet, and in them, the youth destined to the prophetic office, were employed in the study of divine things. Though the sacred history has given us but little information, relative to the exercises in which the youth in these schools were employed, we learn that one particular part of their business was the celebration of God’s praise, in sacred songs, accompanied by instruments of music, Saul, as Samuel had foretold, when he came to the hill of God, which was the seat of one of these colleges, was met by a company of prophets, who “*prophesied upon the psaltery and tabret and pipe and harp.*” And seized by a divine impulse, Saul joined the company and prophesied also. And, on a subsequent occasion, when Saul sent messengers to Naioth, to apprehend David, we

are told that when the messengers saw the company of prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. By prophesying, in these examples, is evidently meant the celebration of God's praise, in sacred songs, under a divine influence. Accordingly, the sons of Asaph and Jeduthun, musicians in the temple, are represented as prophesying with a harp, to give thanks, and to praise the Lord.

In these sacred colleges established in Israel, then, it appears that, among other employments, poetry and music were cultivated by the sons of the prophets; sacred hymns were composed under a divine influence, and were sung in the worship of God, accompanied by musical instruments. Whether any of the hymns composed in these schools of the prophets, have been transmitted to us, in that collection of sacred songs denominated the book of Psalms, we have not the means of determining with certainty.

At length, however, in the person of David, a prophet was raised up, whom the Spirit of the Lord eminently qualified for this purpose; who not only composed a great variety of sacred hymns, but also reduced the public worship of God into a regular system, of which the singing of praise formed a part. That David was divinely qualified for this service, and called to it, is sufficiently evident from the express language of the Bible. "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 Psalmist of Israel said, the Spirit of the Lord spake by me and his word was in my tongue."*

* 2 Sam. 23 : 1, 2.

nacle, according to the appointment of Moses, the Israelites were directed to express their joy in God, by blowing with trumpets at the time of offering the sacrifices. "In the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets, over your burnt-offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace-offerings."* But in connection with the offering of sacrifice, David introduced the singing of praise. By his direction the Levites were numbered and distributed into classes, that among other services connected with the worship of the temple, they might "stand every morning to thank and to praise the Lord, and likewise at evening."† And in the performance of this part of their service, the custom was, that when the offering was presented on the altar, the Levites began to sing the praise of God. "When the burnt-offering began, the song of the Lord began also, with the trumpets and with the instruments ordained by David, king of Israel."‡ And that these regulations in the worship of God and in the services of the temple, were made, not by his own private authority, but by divine direction, we have sufficient evidence. In the instructions which David gave to Solomon with regard to the temple and its worship, according to "the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit," there are included directions, for the priests and the Levites, and for all the work of the service of the house of the Lord. And in relation to these instructions, generally, it is added, "All this, the Lord made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern."§ And as a further confirmation of

* Numb. 10 : 10.

† 2 Chron. 29 : 27.

‡ 1 Chron. 23 : 30.

§ 1 Chron. 28 : 13, 19.

the conclusion that in all these regulations connected with the worship of God, David was directed by divine wisdom, it is stated in the history of the reformation effected under the reign of Hezekiah, that this pious king "set the Levites in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, with psalteries and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad, the kings's seer, and Nathan, the prophet; *for so was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets.*" *

From this historical survey, then, it appears, that we have no evidence, that previous to the age of David, the singing of God's praise formed a part of the stated worship of God. But, on particular occasions, when the dispensations of divine Providence towards the church, called for a public expression of their gratitude, the people of God poured forth their thankful acknowledgments in songs of praise; and at such times some one who was divinely qualified by being filled with the Holy Ghost, furnished a hymn suited to the exigencies of the church. But in all the history of the church, as recorded in the Bible, there is no evidence whatever, that any person presumed to undertake such a service, who was not divinely called to it, by being endowed with the Spirit of inspiration.

At length, after the Lord God of Israel had given rest unto his people, and they were in quiet possession of the land promised to their fathers, God raised up, in the person of David, a prophet, by whom the public worship of God was reduced into a regular system, of which the singing of praise formed a part. And as the celebration of God's praise now became a regular part of divine worship, it became indispensably necessary that divine songs should be provided

* 2 Chron. 29 : 25.

for the use of the church. Accordingly, God, who selects his own instruments for the accomplishment of his work, called David to the performance of this most important service. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he was endowed with those peculiar gifts which were necessary to qualify him for the office of a SWEET PSALMIST OF ISRAEL; and by his instrumentality, the church was furnished with a choice variety of "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," adapted to the diversified circumstances of the private believer and of the church of God. "In these songs," as the celebrated Edwards very justly observes, "David speaks of the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension into heaven, satisfaction and intercession of Christ; his prophetic, kingly and priestly office; his glorious benefits in this life and that which is to come; his union with the church; the blessedness of the church in him; the calling of the Gentiles; the future glory of the church, near the end of the world; and the coming of Christ to the final judgment." * The singing of praise to God, from this time forth, formed a part of the regular worship of God; and by the sweet Psalmist of Israel, the anointed of the God of Jacob, by whom the Spirit of the Lord spake, the church of God was furnished with songs to be employed in divine worship.

The divine appointment of these songs to be used in the worship of God, is just as conclusively established, as that David was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel, by whom the Spirit of the Lord spake. And accordingly, as a matter of historical record, we know that these songs were used by the church with divine

* History of Redemption.

approbation. At the dedication of the temple, it appears that among others, the 136th Psalm was sung. The Levites praised the Lord, saying, "For he is good, for his mercy endureth forever." And in testimony of the divine approbation "The house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God." * And in the history of the reformation which took place during the reign of Hezekiah, who did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done, we are informed that "Hezekiah the king, and the princes, commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord, with the words of David and of Asaph the seer." † David, who by way of eminence was styled the sweet Psalmist of Israel, was the principal individual employed in furnishing songs of praise for the use of the church; but Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun and others, performed their part in the same interesting service. These holy men of God, who were endowed with the requisite gifts by the Spirit of inspiration, furnished for the use of the church, that rich and varied collection of divine hymns contained in the book of Psalms.

By whom these songs, which were evidently composed by different persons and on a great variety of occasions, were collected into a book and arranged in their present order, we are not able to determine with absolute certainty. There is, however, strong probability in support of the conclusion, that this service was performed by Ezra. This distinguished priest and scribe, who acted a conspicuous part in that important reformation which was effected in connection

* 2 Chron. 15 : 13, 14. † 2 Chron. 29 : 30.

with the return of the Jews from Babylon, according to Jewish tradition, by divine direction, collected and arranged the different portions of the sacred writings then extant, and digested them in that systematic order in which they have been handed down to us. But let this matter be decided as it may, it is sufficient for us to know, that whoever may have collected these songs together, it was done with divine approbation; for the writers of the New Testament refer to them by the title, "the book of Psalms." And to use the language of the celebrated writer already referred to, "it is manifest that the book of Psalms was given of God for this end;" that is, that it might be used by the church in singing God's praise. "It was used in the church of Israel by God's appointment. This is manifest by the title of many of the Psalms, in which they are inscribed to the chief musician; that is, to the man that was appointed to be the leader of divine songs in the temple, in the public worship of Israel."

In this conclusion, then, we rest. In the revelation which God has given to his church, we find a collection of divine songs, the matter of which, the titles by which they are designated, and the use which was originally made of them with divine approbation, manifest, that the specific end for which they were given, was, that they should be employed in singing God's praise; and being communicated to the church by her God and King, for this purpose, they should be used in this part of divine worship. Whether any other system of songs has been provided by the King of Zion, superseding the necessity and propriety of using these, shall be the subject of inquiry before this discussion is brought to a close. The point in the general argument at which we have arrived, is, that the songs contained in the book of Psalms, were given to the church

to be employed in the worship of God. These are the songs of Zion; the Lord's songs; and therefore, we are certain that in singing them in the worship of God, we use that which he has appointed.

The reader is desired to keep in view, the progress of the argument. It has been my object in the first place to examine the claims of an uninspired psalmody. By an uninspired psalmody, is meant as the reader will understand a system of songs composed by men who lay no claim to inspiration, the matter of which has been professedly collected from the sacred Scriptures. Having discovered no authority for the use of such a system of songs, my object in the next place has been to advocate the claims of the songs of the Lord contained in the book of Psalms. That we have divine authority for the use of these, it is humbly hoped, has been satisfactorily proved. But as yet I have not even attempted to show that the church is confined to the use of these songs exclusively. Whether the songs contained in the book of Psalms exclusively, are to be employed in the worship of God; or whether in connection with these, other songs of praise which are found in the Bible, may be used, is yet to be the subject of inquiry.

CHAPTER VII.

Continuation of the Subject—No Book of Psalms in the New Testament, nor any Appointment Given to any Man to Prepare one.

We have already seen, that while it is the duty of the church to sing psalms, God has provided for her a book of Psalms, in the use of which she may celebrate his praise, “in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth.” The name which its divine Author has given to this collection of sacred hymns, the matter of them, and the use which the church, by divine direction, originally made of them, all concur in establishing the conclusion, that it is the will of God that the songs contained in the book of psalms should be sung in his worship, both public and private. This conclusion is further confirmed by the consideration—

2d. That there is no book of Psalms in the New Testament. The duty of singing God’s praise is very distinctly recognised in the New Testament. “By him,” says the Apostle to the Hebrews, “let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.”* And again: “Is any merry? Let him sing psalms.”† At the close of the last passover, our Lord and his disciples sung an hymn. And in the gloomy precincts

* Heb. 13: 15.

† James 5: 13.

of a dungeon, Paul and Silas, at the hour of midnight, "prayed and sang praises unto God." But, while we are exhorted to offer unto God, the sacrifice of praise, and have the example of our Lord and of his Apostles to excite us to engage in this delightful exercise, we find no collection of psalms, and hymns, and songs, in the New Testament. In what sense is it reasonable to suppose, that the primitive christians would understand the apostolic direction, "Is any merry? Let him sing psalms?" To assist the plain christian in determining what is the proper answer to this inquiry, let me propose another question. When our Lord said to his hearers, "Search the Scriptures;" in what sense is it to be supposed, that this direction would be understood? No one will pretend that our Lord designed that his hearers should understand him as instructing them to prepare writings, the matter of which was to be taken from the Bible, which they might consult for their improvement, instead of searching the Holy Scriptures for their edification. Equally unreasonable would it be to suppose, that the apostolic direction, with regard to singing psalms, could be understood by the primitive christians, as authorizing them to prepare psalms to be used in the worship of God, instead of those which he himself had provided in his word. As the command of Christ, "Search the Scriptures," supposes that there were in existence sacred writings, with which those to whom the command was addressed, were acquainted, so the apostolic direction, "sing psalms," supposes that there were psalms in existence, which those, to whom the direction was given, were to use. Those christians to whom the words of the Apostle James were originally addressed, knew full well, that among the sacred writings which God had given to his church, there was a

“book of Psalms.” And the exhortation to sing psalms would naturally be understood by them as a direction to make use of the psalms which the Spirit of infinite wisdom had already provided. And in what sense would the Hebrew christians understand the words of the Apostle, when he exhorted them to offer continually the sacrifice of praise to God? These Hebrews knew full well, how important it was that in all their offerings, those things only should be presented on the altar which God himself had appointed. They knew, moreover, that God himself had prepared and given to his church, a divine collection of psalms and hymns and songs, to be employed in singing his praise. And knowing these things, can it be supposed, that they would feel at liberty to lay aside those songs which God had prepared, and undertake to provide others more suitable for themselves? Can we for a moment entertain the thought, that they could understand the Apostle as authorizing them to disregard the lamb which God had provided as an offering for himself, and to come before the Lord with the blind, the halt and the lame? Had they presumed to do so, would they not have had cause to apprehend the execution of the sentence, “Cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing?” *

And in addition to this consideration, it deserves to be particularly noticed, that while there is no book of Psalms in the New Testament, there is no intimation whatever that one was needed; nor is there either a direction given to any man to furnish such a book, nor a single promise of the influences of the Holy Spirit to assist any man in preparing one. Under the

* Malachi 1: 14.

former dispensation, God raised up a "sweet Psalmist of Israel," whom he endowed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and eminently qualified for the important service. And by the instrumentality of a man, whom God called to the work and fitted for it, a collection of sacred songs, has been communicated to the church, which christians all over the world, in every age, have found from comfortable experience, to be admirably adapted to the end for which it was given. And when our glorious Lord, with whom is the residue of the Spirit, arose from the dead and ascended up far above all heavens that he might fill all things; and gave some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ; if it had been necessary for the edification of his church, is it not reasonable to suppose that among other gifts, he would have conferred the Spirit of Psalmody? But among the various services to which different individuals were called by the Head of the Church, and for which he qualified them, by imparting to them the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the preparation of a system of psalmody, for the edifying of the body of Christ, is never mentioned. Though with him is the residue of the Spirit, it was not his pleasure to raise up and anoint a "sweet Psalmist of Israel," under the New Testament dispensation. And why was no one called to this important office? The only rational answer which can be given, is, that HE in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, did not consider it necessary. However liberal he may be in the distribution of his gifts, he bestows none that are unnecessary. And, having already made provision for the edification of his church, by furnishing her with a book of Psalms, he did not call any of those, whom after his ascension, he endowed

with the gifts of the Spirit, to provide another. Since, then, we are in the New Testament commanded to sing psalms, but never directed to make psalms, we come to the conclusion, that we have the sanction of the King of Zion, authorizing the use of the psalms and hymns and songs, which had already been furnished, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

It may, however, be said, that these considerations, at most, prove nothing more than that we should employ the songs of scripture in the worship of God; but will not establish the position, that the church should be confined to the use of those songs which are contained in the book of Psalms. I proceed then to remark,—

3d. In the last place, that from the fact that God has given his church a book of Psalms, it would appear to be the divine will that this should be used to the exclusion of all others. We have already had occasion to remark, that in ancient days, on various occasions, individuals, under the influence of the Spirit of inspiration, gave expression to the gratitude of their hearts, in a song of praise. Such songs of praise are found in various parts of the Bible. But, in process of time, a great variety of songs, composed by different men on various occasions, were collected together into one book, which not only has a place in the volume of inspiration, but to which God himself has given a peculiar title, "The book of Psalms," or songs of praise. The peculiar title of the book designates the end for which it was specially intended. And it is a fact which deserves particular notice, that some of the songs contained in the Book of Psalms, are found likewise in other parts of the Bible. The eighteenth psalm is found in the second book of Samuel, and the ninety-sixth, and parts of some other psalms, are found

in the second book of Chronicles. Other songs, such as the song of Moses at the Red Sea, the song of Deborah and Barak and others, found in different parts of the Bible, are not transferred to the book of Psalms. And the question naturally arises, Why is this distinction made? Why are some of those songs, which are found in other parts of the Bible, introduced likewise, into the book of Psalms, while others have no place in that collection? I can conceive of no answer so satisfactory as this; that the book of Psalms being designed for permanent use in the worship of God, those songs have a place in this book, which, in the estimation of infinite wisdom, were best adapted to the edification of the church in all ages.

But, though the fact that God has provided for his church a collection of sacred songs, which he himself has denominated, "The book of Psalms," is with me a conclusive reason, why these songs should be used in the worship of God, to the exclusion of all others, yet, as I have already said, between those on the one hand, who plead for the exclusive use of the book of Psalms, and those on the other, who admit the propriety of using in the worship of God, any song of praise contained in the Bible, the difference of opinion is not of such a nature as should disturb the peace of the church of God. Such a difference should, I believe, be made a matter of forbearance among brethren. Let the principle be explicitly recognized, that no songs of praise shall be used in the worship of God, but those which are given by inspiration of God, and then the peace and harmony of the christian world are not likely to be interrupted by controversy on this subject. Let the principle prevail, that an inspired psalmody exclusively shall be used, and I doubt not that experience would soon demonstrate that the church

would have no disposition to search beyond the limits of the book of Psalms, for matter suitable for praise. If all the songs of praise, found throughout the different parts of the Bible, were examined with care, I believe it would be seen, that there is not an idea expressed in any one of them, which is not exhibited in nearly the same identical words, in some part of the book of Psalms. What, then, would be gained, in so far as the wants of the church are concerned, were all the songs throughout the Bible added to those contained in this divine collection? God has not only provided for his church, songs of praise, but he has given her a book of Psalms. This book is the workmanship of God, the production of infinite wisdom. It is perfect, not only in its parts, but as a system of praise, and it needs no addition.

It appears then, that in the Old Testament, the duty of praising God, by singing psalms or songs, is distinctly recognised: on various occasions men who were moved by the Holy Ghost, furnished songs of praise appropriate to the circumstances of the church of God. Among those whom God was pleased to employ in this service, David, the royal prophet, stands pre-eminently distinguished as the sweet Psalmist of Israel. In process of time, a choice and varied collection of sacred songs, composed by different inspired men, on a variety of occasions, was given to the church by the God of Israel; to which collection of divine songs, he himself has appended the title, **THE BOOK OF PSALMS.** These songs are not the effusions of pious, well-meaning, but fallible men; they are the productions of the Holy Spirit, who spake by the mouth of his servants, the prophets. In these sacred hymns, we have not an exhibition of human views of divine truth, which may be correct or may

be erroneous; but we have the word of God itself, which is pure as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. The praises of God are exhibited in these divine songs, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth. That God will accept the ascriptions of praise which are given to him in these psalms, we are absolutely certain; because in them his Spirit has taught us to ascribe to him, the glory which is due unto his name.

We pass on to the New Testament, and we find our Lord and his Apostles not only recognising the duty, but setting an example of praising God. What particular psalms and hymns they used, we are not expressly told; but every part of the New Testament furnishes evidence of their familiarity with the book of Psalms. And that he in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and his Apostles who were endued with power from on high, did not use the effusions of uninspired men in the worship of God, is certain. In an interview with the Apostles, after his resurrection, our Lord addressed them in the following words: "These are the words that I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, *and in the psalms*, concerning me." From this and other declarations of like character in the New Testament, we have infallible evidence, that Jesus Christ himself is the great subject of the book of Psalms. This the Apostles understood, when their divine Master opened their understandings, that they might understand the scriptures; and the same thing will be understood by all who are taught of the Lord. And when we consider how frequently the Apostles introduce the psalms, in their discourses and epistles, we cannot doubt that they

regarded the matter of these sacred songs as very suitable to be employed in the worship of God. One thing, however, is certain, that neither our Lord nor his Apostles have furnished any psalms or songs, in the New Testament, for the use of the church, much less have they provided a book of Psalms. And further, there is no appointment given to any man to furnish psalms to be employed in the worship of God, nor is there a promise of the Spirit of Psalmody, to assist any one in performing this important service. And yet the Apostles of our Lord and Savior call upon us to "offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually," and they exhort us to "sing psalms." And the conclusion from the whole, is, that it is the duty of the church in offering unto God the sacrifice of praise, to present that which he has appointed, and to celebrate his praise in the use of those psalms, which he himself has provided.

CHAPTER VIII.

An Examination of some Objections which are Urged against the Use of the Book of Psalms in the Worship of God.

The venerable author of the "Inquiry," in common with all others who have written in support of the claims of an uninspired psalmody, has thought proper in defending his principles, to urge to some extent, objections to the use of some of the songs contained in the book of Psalms. We have already had occasion to notice the sentiment which he avows, "that all that is typical and local in the Psalms, is not suited to gospel worship and praise;" and it is hoped that the remarks which have been made, have satisfied the reader that such a sentiment is not consistent with that reverence which is due to the psalms which God has given to his church. Without pursuing this subject any further, I proceed to notice some other objections, which are urged against the use of the songs of inspiration.

1. "The songs contained in the book of Psalms, speak of a Savior to come, and consequently, they are not adapted to the edification of the church now, since the Redeemer has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." On this subject the author of the "Inquiry" employs the following language: "The truth is, the true church, under the Old Testament dispensation, praised God for a promised Redeemer,

and were saved by faith in the promise ; but we have seen that the true church on earth, and the redeemed church in heaven, praise him for a Redeemer who has come, and shed his blood for the remission of sins ; and shall we not follow her example ?” The connection in which this remark is found, makes it sufficiently evident, that the venerable author takes the ground of the objection just stated, and that his design is to show that those psalms, which speak of the work of redemption as yet to be accomplished, are “not suited to gospel worship and praise.” “The true church,” he says, “under the Old Testament dispensation, praised God for a promised Redeemer ;” and the conclusion which he would have us to draw, is, that those songs are not suited to gospel worship, because the church is now called to praise God “for a Redeemer who has come.” If this objection has any force at all, it will prove entirely too much. The whole of the Old Testament, as well as the book of Psalms, was composed at a period anterior to the incarnation and death of Jesus Christ. And consequently, if this fact renders the Psalms unfit to be sung in the worship of God, it will follow that they and all the Old Testament, are unfit to be read in the worship of God. For, if they may be read in the worship of God, as the rule of our faith and life, why may they not be sung in the worship of God, since it was for this end they were especially given ?

It is taken for granted, in the objection, that if in the Psalms, the church praises God for a Redeemer to come, therefore they are not suitable for the church now, since he has come. But it so happens, that every where in the Psalms, the Redeemer of the church is presented to the view of our faith, not as one who should appear in some distant age, but as

already engaged in the accomplishment of his Mediatorial work. In the 22d Psalm, the Redeemer is exhibited before our eyes, as suffering in the garden and on the cross; and we hear him uttering the very words which dropped from his lips while suspended upon the cross,—“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Again he is presented to our view, as having triumphed over death and the grave, and having ascended on high; angels, principalities and powers, being made subject to him. And the church praises him, not as a promised Savior, but as an ascended and triumphant Redeemer. “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.”* Permit me now to call the attention of the objector to a difficulty in which his principle involves him. If it were true that the Psalms speak of a Savior to come, and therefore are not suited to gospel worship, then those numerous psalms which speak of a suffering, risen and ascended Savior, were not suited to the worship of the Old Testament church, because the Redeemer had not then appeared in human nature. That is, though these psalms were given to the church by the God of infinite wisdom, to be employed in his worship, they were not adapted to the end for which they were given! O vain man, who art thou that replest against God?

But is it true, that the Psalms present the Savior to the view of our faith, as one who was yet to come? Is it really so, my venerable Father, permit me respectfully to ask,—is it the truth that in the Psalms given to the church under the Old Testament, she

* Psalm 68: 18.

praised God for a promised Redeemer, who had not yet come? It is true that these Psalms were composed long before the actual appearance of Jesus Christ in human nature. But it is no less true that these divine songs are the productions of that omniscient Spirit, before whose view all futurity is spread out, and things which were then future, are described by him as now taking place, or already past. For example, in the 22d Psalm, we hear our suffering Redeemer exclaiming, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. The assembly of the wicked have enclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet." Again: This same glorious personage is presented to our view, as exalted upon the holy hill of Zion, in the character of God's anointed King, and proclaiming defiance to the opposers of his kingdom: "Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?" Again, he is described as coming to judgment, and all nature is summoned to pay obeisance to him: "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad before the Lord, for he cometh to judge the earth; he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." If the principle assumed in the objection were well founded, that psalms which exhibit a promised Savior, who is yet to come, are not suited to gospel worship, it would then follow that a large portion of the psalms are better adapted to the worship of the church now, than they were formerly; for in them, the Redeemer is described as already come, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; as having risen from the dead; as having ascended on high, and as having received gifts for men. But the truth is, there is no force in the objection at all. Ever since the first promise of

a Savior was given to our lost world, Jesus Christ has been the only hope of sinful man. By faith in him, as exhibited to them upon the infallible testimony of God, believers were saved under the Old Testament; and it is by faith in him, as revealed to us upon the testimony of God in the gospel, that believers now are saved. The merit of the Savior's death was as effectual in securing the salvation of the believer, before he actually laid down his life a ransom for many as it is now. And those divine songs, in which his Spirit taught the church to praise him, before the period of his incarnation, are, in all respects, as well adapted to the edification of the church now, as they were in the beginning. Not only so—I do not hesitate to say, that they are now better adapted to this end, as, in consequence of the light which the gospel has reflected upon them, the fulness of their meaning may be more thoroughly understood.

2. Another objection urged against the use of the songs contained in the book of Psalms, is, that they breathe a spirit, in some instances, inconsistent with the gospel. After adverting to the “dull indifference, the negligent and the thoughtless air, that sits upon the faces of a whole assembly, while the psalm is on their lips,” Dr. Watts observes, “I have been long convinced, that one great occasion of this evil arises from the *matter and words* to which we confine all our songs. Some of them are *almost opposite to the spirit of the gospel*; many of them foreign to the state of the New Testament, and widely different from the present circumstances of christians. Hence it comes to pass, that when spiritual affections are excited within us, and our souls are raised a little above this earth, in the beginning of a psalm, we are checked on a sudden in our ascent toward heaven, by some expres-

sions that are most suitable to the days of *carnal ordinances*, and fit only to be sung in the *worldly sanctuary*. While we are kindling into divine love, by the meditations of the loving kindness of God, and the multitude of his tender mercies; within a few verses, some *dreadful curse against men* is proposed to our lips, which is so contrary to the new commandment of loving our enemies." * This, it must be confessed, is strong language for an imperfect, erring mortal to apply to the word of God. It is true, that my venerable Father does not employ precisely such language as this: I suppose, however, he would wish to be considered as coinciding in sentiment with this celebrated writer. Accordingly, when speaking of Watts' Hymns, and of the errors, which, in the judgment of some, they contain, he remarks, page 204 of the "Inquiry,"—"Yet we do not remember to have seen one single error, of any consequence, that has been established." His kind sympathy for this writer, he further manifests, by speaking of him as the "much abused and slandered Dr. Watts." That I may not be liable to the charge of slandering Dr. Watts, he shall speak for himself, and his sentiments shall be stated in his own words. In addition to the extract already given, I would subjoin a note which Dr. Watts has appended to the fifty-fifth psalm. "I have left out some whole psalms and several parts of others, that tend to fill the mind with overwhelming sorrows, or *sharp resentment*, neither of which are so well suited to the gospel."

According to Dr. Watts then, and all who coincide in sentiment with him, there are some of the psalms, which "tend to fill the mind with sharp resentment;"

* Preface to Hymns.

“some of them are almost opposite to the spirit of the gospel;” and in some of them, a “dreadful curse against men is proposed to our lips, which is so contrary to the new commandment of loving our enemies.” I would respectfully ask the author of the “Inquiry,” if it is really an error of no consequence, to represent the Holy Ghost, as inculcating a spirit in one part of divine revelation, which is at war with the spirit of another? Is it an error of no consequence, to charge the Holy Spirit with being the author of a sentiment which “tends to fill the mind with sharp resentment?” And are they slanderers of Dr. Watts, who represent him as, in these and similar instances, uttering sentiments which are directly derogatory to the Spirit of inspiration? when men speak thus unguardedly in relation to the songs contained in the book of Psalms, do they not overlook entirely the divine inspiration of that book? do they not speak as though they considered these divine songs, as the productions of erring men like themselves, and forget that they are finding fault with the Word of God?

It is an error of very pernicious tendency, if my venerable Father will allow me to say it, to represent one part of the Word of God as contradictory to another. It is doubtless true, that the mind of God is more fully and clearly revealed in one part of his word, than it is in another. But this is a very different thing from saying, that one part of the Word of God tends to fill the mind with passions, which are contrary to the new commandment of loving our enemies. The duty of loving our enemies, is enforced by a new example and new motives, and our obligation to perform this duty, is set in a new light under the gospel; but the duty itself is not new, nor is it by any means peculiar to the gospel. The Scribes and

Pharisees, who made void the law of God by their traditions, did indeed teach the abhorrent doctrine, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy." But there is no such doctrine countenanced in any part of the Word of God. The law of God is like himself, unchangeable; and it always required that we should love our enemies. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," is a summary of what the law of God requires, in so far as our duty to our fellow-man is concerned. All this was required under the legal dispensation, and nothing more than this is required under the gospel. And to say that there is a sentiment contained in the book of Psalms, which has a tendency to fill the mind with "sharp resentment," or excite unholy passions, at war with the commandment which requires us to love our enemies, I must be permitted to say, is a slander upon the Holy Spirit, who is its author.

As it is important that this subject should be understood, for the purpose of assisting the humble inquirer after truth, it may be proper to pursue it a little further. It is entirely too common, with a certain class of writers, to represent the Psalmist as expressing feelings of resentment and hatred against his personal enemies. Accordingly, Dr. Watts, in giving an account of the principles on which his *Imitation of the Psalms of David* is prepared, observes, "Where the Psalmist uses sharp invectives against his personal enemies, I have endeavored to turn the edge of them against our spiritual adversaries, sin, satan and temptation." To say nothing now of the daring presumption of a sinful mortal, in taking such liberty with the Word of God, the serious christian is desired to look at the sentiment here avowed. The Psalmist is represented as using "sharp invectives against his per-

sonal enemies." Was the Psalmist then, under the influence of the Spirit of inspiration? Is it true, as the Apostle declares, that the Holy Ghost spaké by the mouth of David? In using such language as Dr. Watts here employs, do not men virtually charge the Spirit of love and grace, with inspiring the Psalmist with feelings of resentment, and with putting into his mouth sharp invectives against his personal enemies? And I would appeal not to the prejudices of the ignorant, but to the sober reflection, and to the enlightened consciences of all those who reverence the authority of God in his Word, while I ask, does not such language offer a fearful indignity to the Spirit of inspiration?

The authority of Dr. Watts' name, has done much to produce the impression, that there is something in the divine songs, contained in the book of Psalms, so entirely contrary to the spirit of the gospel, that many will not sing them. These songs are confessedly the Word of God; they are, as all admit, the songs of the Spirit; and yet there are some professing christians, who wish to be considered as so much under the influence of the spirit of christianity, that they will not sing these songs of the Spirit! This surely is and must be a sinful prejudice. Under the influence of the mistaken idea, to which I have referred, some of these divine songs have been denominated "cursing psalms;" and it is said by some, that a christian cannot with propriety use them. Let us, for a moment, examine this principle, in reference to a particular psalm of that class, of which men have spoken so unguardedly. The 109th psalm is one of that class, in which, according to Dr. Watts, "some dreadful curse against men is proposed to our lips, which is so contrary to the new commandment of loving our enemies."

Instead of singing in the praise of God such dreadful curses against men, Dr. Watts has given us, as his 109th psalm, a song bearing the title, "Love to enemies, from the example of Christ." That it is our duty to love our enemies, all will admit. And that there is nothing inculcated in the book of Psalms, inconsistent with that duty, must be admitted by all who acknowledge the divine inspiration of this book. And yet Dr. Watts proceeds upon the supposition, that there is something in this psalm contrary to the new commandment of loving our enemies. And therefore, he changes its spirit and design, and gives us in its stead, a song which inculcates, "Love to enemies, from the example of Christ." Now it so happens, that in relation to this very psalm, we have the testimony of scripture to assure us, that in it the Holy Spirit exhibits the fearful doom, which awaits the finally impenitent. "Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said,—Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus."* It is then, a manifest impropriety, to represent the Psalmist, as uttering "sharp invectives against his personal enemies," or as proposing to our lips "some dreadful curse against men." A manifest impropriety, did I say? The language is entirely too mild! It is daring profanity to say, as Dr. Watts has said, that the 59th and 109th psalms, "are so full of cursings, that they hardly become the tongue of a follower of the blessed Jesus." These words, christian reader, were spoken by the Spirit of Christ, and yet according to Dr. Watts, and those who maintain that there

* Acts 1 : 16.

is no error of any consequence in his writings, they “hardly become the tongue of a follower of the blessed Jesus!”

It is apprehended, that there is prevalent in the christian world, a practical mistake on this subject, which is of pernicious tendency. It is the duty of the christian to love his own enemies; but is it his duty to love the enemies of Christ, and sympathise with them? Our blessed Redeemer has set us an example of praying for the forgiveness of our enemies, and his example we should follow, and his spirit we should cultivate; and every part of the Word of God, where it is received in faith, will have a tendency to produce this result. But when the Lord Jesus denounces his displeasure against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, shall not the christian, who is a partaker of the Spirit of Christ, approve the sentence? When he, as the righteous Judge, shall say in relation to the finally impenitent, “Those, mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me,” will not all the subjects of his grace respond, Amen? It is a sickly and spurious charity, entirely different from the charity of the gospel, which would sympathise with the enemies of the Lord Jesus, and in the excess of its liberality would take to its embrace, rebels and traitors to the Prince of peace. And such a charity, it is admitted, has no countenance from any thing contained in the book of Psalms, nor in any other part of the word of God.

3. Another objection which has been urged against the use of the scripture Psalms, is, that they are so Jewish and unintelligible that they are not adapted to christian worship. In his preface to his hymns, Dr. Watts, speaking of the psalms, observes, “When we

are just entering into an evangelical frame, by some of the glories of the gospel, presented in the brightest figures of Judaism, yet the very next line perhaps, which the clerk parcels out unto us, hath something in it so extremely Jewish and cloudy, that it darkens our sight of God the Savior." And in his "Essay for the Improvement of Psalmody," he remarks, that in singing the Psalms, "persons of seriousness and judgment, that consider what they sing, are often forced to break off in the midst, to omit whole lines and verses; and thus the tune, and the sense, and the devotion, is interrupted at once, because they dare not sing without understanding, and almost against their consciences." The christian reader, startled by such sentiments, exclaims, "Is this the man who has given to the christian churches a system of Psalmody, which has usurped the place of the songs of inspiration?" What! "Persons of seriousness and judgment, forced to omit whole lines and verses" of those songs which are the productions of God's Holy Spirit, "because they dare not sing without understanding, and almost against their consciences!" But this is not all. Where persons of seriousness and judgment are forced to break off, he adds,—"The more unthinking multitude go on singing in cheerful ignorance, wheresoever the clerk guides them, across the river Jordan, through the land of Gebal, Ammon and Amalek; they join their song in concert with the high sounding cymbals; their thoughts are bedarkened with the smoke of incense and covered with Jewish veils." The conclusion to which the author would bring us, is, that many of the Psalms are so Jewish, so cloudy and unintelligible, that the use of them would tend rather to hinder, than to aid devotion.

But does not the reader at once perceive, that if

there is any force in this objection, it is an impeachment of the wisdom and goodness of God, who gave to his church, songs so ill adapted to the end for which they were given? Dr. Watts, by a strange inconsistency, adds, that "Such language" as that contained in the Psalms, "was suited by infinite wisdom, to raise the affections of the saints of that day; but I fear it does but sink our devotion and hurt our worship." Now, I would ask, how could the language of these divine songs raise the pious affections and aid the devotion of the saints of former days, if its tendency now, is to "sink our devotion and hurt our worship?" We enjoy superior advantages, and with the clearer light of the gospel, are prepared to understand much more fully the meaning of these sacred songs. And consequently, instead of being less suitable to be employed now for the use of God's people, than they were formerly, they are really better adapted to the edification of the church under the gospel, than they were under the legal dispensation. But it will be said, Would not songs drawn up in the language of the New Testament, be better adapted to the worship of God now, than those in which there are frequent allusions to the rites and ceremonies of the law? I answer, if the God of infinite wisdom had thought that such songs would have been better for his church, it is reasonable to suppose that he would have provided them. But as there is no book of Psalms provided in the New Testament, I conclude, that he who knows what is best for his church, did not consider that any was necessary.

The objection which we are considering, seems to be founded upon mistaken views of the worship of the church under the former dispensation. It seems to take it for granted, that the worshipper under the

law, depended on the ceremonial rites and sacrifices for acceptance with God. My venerable Father will excuse the liberty which I take in saying, that he employs language which might seem to countenance this idea, though, of course, I do not suppose that he holds such a principle. For example, on page 209 of the "Inquiry," when speaking of the greater suitability of songs prepared in the language of the New Testament, he remarks,—“In order to find acceptance with God, shall we say with the Psalmist, in the 66th Psalm, I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams; I will offer bullocks with goats; or, as the Apostle exhorts, having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,” &c. Heb. 10: 19—22. What, I would ask, was the meaning of the true worshipper under the law, when he came before God with such language as that employed in this psalm? Did he depend upon the sacrifices of fatlings, of bullocks and of goats, for acceptance with God? Most certainly he did not. Through the medium of these bloody sacrifices, he, in the exercise of faith, looked to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. He depended, for acceptance with God, upon the same great Sacrifice for sin, which is now the foundation of the christian's hope. If then, the ancient believer could approach unto God acceptably in the use of such a song; if, while he had before the eye of his body, a bleeding lamb, he had presented to the eye of his faith the Lamb of God; if the language of such a song, raised in his breast pious affections, and aided devotion, why should such expressions and such language “sink our devotion and hurt our worship,” since we have the light of the gospel to render their import more intelligible? If these and similar expressions, did not “bedarken the

thoughts" of the ancient believer, and hide the Savior from his sight, why should they have on us so injurious an effect? If such language served to lead the ancient Israelite to Him who is the desire of all nations, why may it not now raise the thoughts of the humble christian, surrounded as he is with clearer light, to Him who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth?

I will close this chapter with a notice of one other remark of the author of the "Inquiry," which seems to me exceptionable. He is animadverting upon the declaration which many of the best and ablest men who ever lived, have made, that the "Psalms contain the very substance and marrow of the gospel;" and he boldly affirms, "We deny the correctness and truth of the assertion." He at the same time, "protests against being called an enemy of the book of Psalms." It seems, however, that if he prized the Psalms as a "precious part of divine revelation," he does not like to hear a great deal said in commendation of them. Accordingly he adds, "But that they contain as clear and as full a view of the important and fundamental doctrines of the gospel, as the New Testament, we are astonished any man should assert in the present day." But, venerable Father, it is the creature of an excited imagination, which has excited your astonishment. Mr. Reid, whom you oppose, has said no such thing. He does not say that the important and fundamental doctrines of the gospel, are as fully and clearly revealed in the Psalms, as they are in the New Testament. What he says, is, that the Psalms contain "the very substance and marrow of the gospel." This is surely a different sentiment from that which fills you with astonishment. From the position which the "marrow" occupies in the animal system, I would

suppose that it does not convey the idea of a thing very fully and clearly exposed to view. The statement of Mr. Reid, the truth of which you so positively deny, says nothing at all in relation to the comparative fulness and clearness with which the doctrines of the gospel are revealed in the gospel, but is simply this, that the Psalms contain "the very substance and marrow of the gospel." And I would appeal to your sober judgment, while I respectfully ask, Is not this the literal truth? Is not Jesus Christ himself, every where brought to our view, in the book of Psalms? In the Psalms, we have presented to our view the incarnation, birth, life, passion, death, resurrection, ascension, kingdom and priesthood of our Lord and Savior; and do they not then, contain "the very substance and marrow of the gospel?" With your permission, venerable Father, I will say that the Psalms *do* contain "the very substance and marrow of the gospel;" and such has been the judgment of the church of God in all ages.

CHAPTER IX.

Watts' Psalms are not, nor were they by their Author Intended to be, a Version of the Book of Psalms.

As it is by Watts' "Psalms of David imitated in the language of the New Testament," that the sacred songs contained in the book of Psalms, have been put out of the place they were designed to occupy in the worship of the church, it is proposed to examine with some care, the principles on which the system of this distinguished author is founded. It is common with many, to speak of Watts' Psalms as though they were a version of the songs contained in the book of Psalms; and there are no doubt many, who, having never examined the subject with attention, are laboring under the mistaken impression that they are a version of the songs of inspiration. But all who are acquainted with the subject, know, that this is not the fact. With many, the controversy on Psalmody, is regarded as nothing more than a dispute with reference to the relative merits of different versions. One prefers the version of Watts; another esteems more highly that of Rouse. But this is an exceedingly unfair representation of the point at issue. For, Watts' Psalms cannot, with any propriety, be regarded as a version of the book of Psalms. And that the reader may be fully satisfied that I do the author no injustice in making this statement, I shall refer particularly to his

own language. For example, he says, "I have chosen rather to *imitate*, than to *translate*." And further, he observes,—“I have not been so curious and exact in striving every where to express the ancient sense and meaning of David, but have rather expressed myself, as I may suppose David would have done, had he lived in the days of christianity.” In explaining the principle on which his system is founded, he observes,—“My own design, in short, is this, namely, to accommodate the book of Psalms to christian worship. And in order to this, it is necessary to divest David and Asaph of every other character but that of a psalmist and a saint, and to make them always speak the common sense of a christian.”* Such is the language in which this celebrated writer describes his own design. And it is to practise an imposition on the community, and to do great injustice to Dr. Watts himself, to represent his Psalms as a version of the book of Psalms. It was no part of his design, to give a correct translation of the songs of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, but to make him speak “the common sense of a christian.” “In all places,” he observes, “I have kept my grand design in view; and that, is, to teach my author to speak like a christian.” It is then perfectly plain, that it was far from the intention of Dr. Watts, to give a translation of the language of the Psalmist. His avowed design was, to “teach my author to speak like a christian.” It would appear then, that in the estimation of this man, who has furnished a large portion of the christian church with a system of Psalmody, that the teaching of the Holy Spirit, which the Psalmist enjoyed, was very insufficient, and that it was necessary that one in modern

* Preface to Psalms of David imitated.

times should undertake the office of teaching him "to speak like a christian."

After having stated his plan, Dr. Watts gives us the following account of its execution: "Attempting the work with this view, I have entirely omitted some whole psalms, and large pieces of many others; and have chosen out of all of them, such parts only, as might easily and naturally be accommodated to the various occasions of the christian life, or at least might afford us some beautiful allusion to christian affairs. These I have copied and explained in the general style of the gospel; nor have I confined my expressions to any particular party or opinion, that, in words prepared for public worship and for the lips of multitudes, there might not be a syllable offensive to christians, whose judgments may differ in the lesser matters of religion. Where the Psalmist uses sharp invectives against his personal enemies, I have endeavored to turn the edge of them against our spiritual adversaries, sin, satan, and temptation. Where the flights of his faith and love are sublime, I have often sunk the expressions within the reach of an ordinary christian. Where the words imply some peculiar wants or distresses, joys or blessings, I have used words of greater latitude and comprehension,—suited to the general circumstances of men."

Such then, is the author's own account of his plan, and of the manner of its execution. And the serious consideration of every one who reverences the Bible as the word of God, is requested to the following remarks.

1. Dr. Watts, in his system, has "entirely omitted some whole psalms, and large pieces of many others;" and "out of all of them," he has chosen such parts only; as to him seemed proper. And will it be pre-

tended, after this plain and honest avowal, that Watts' Psalms are a version of the book of Psalms? The idea is preposterous. Pronounce them good poetry, if you will; call them evangelical songs, if you choose. But remember, they are Watts' Psalms. They neither are, nor were they by their author designed to be, a version of the book of Psalms.

2. Such parts of the Psalms, as he thought proper to select, he observes, "I have copied and explained in the general style of the gospel." The reader will then observe, that Watts' Psalms, are not the songs of inspiration, but they are his explanation of them. And I would ask the serious christian, Are you willing to adopt a man's explanation of the word of God, in preference to the word of God itself?

3. Consider, moreover, the liberty which this writer has taken with the word of God. "Where the Psalmist uses sharp invectives against his personal enemies, I have endeavored to turn the edge of them against our spiritual adversaries." Was, then, the Psalmist under the direction of the Holy Ghost, and yet used "sharp invectives against his personal enemies?" Does not such language reflect contempt upon the Holy Spirit, who spake by the mouth of the Psalmist? But if there is something reprehensible in the spirit of the Psalmist, at one time, it seems that his spirit was, at another, too heavenly. Accordingly he adds, "Where the flights of his faith and love are sublime, I have often sunk the expressions within the reach of an ordinary christian." It seems, then, that Dr. Watts found it necessary, sometimes, to teach his author "to speak like a christian;" while at other times, the flights of the Psalmist's love and faith are so sublime, that it becomes necessary for Watts to sink the expressions, and make him speak more like

a man on earth! And I would propose a question for the serious consideration of all conscientious christians,—Does not that church, which employs in the worship of God, songs prepared on such a principle, by her practice, sanction the contempt which such language reflects upon the Spirit of inspiration? I am aware that there are many who use Watts' Psalms, who have never examined the subject, and are unacquainted with the principles upon which his system is founded. They have been accustomed to regard the psalms of Watts, as a version of the book of Psalms; and, in using them as such, they have had no thought of treating the word of God with disrespect. But let me entreat the serious christian to look at this subject. God has given us, in his word, a book of Psalms, which is confessedly the work of inspiration. Now what has been done with this divine book? Dr. Watts, in preparing a system of psalms for the use of the church, has "entirely omitted some whole psalms, and large pieces of many others." And why? Because he considered them unsuitable for the church under the present dispensation. And do you think, let me ask the humble believer, that the word of God has been given us in such a defective form, that some parts of it may be laid aside as useless, while portions may be selected, which may be profitably retained?

That this subject may be better understood, let us examine a little more particularly the manner in which Dr. Watts has executed his plan. In the 109th psalm we have a specimen of the manner in which this writer teaches his "author to speak like a christian." The title of that psalm in Watts, is, "Love to enemies from the example of Christ." I need not inform the reader, that this is something entirely different from the inspired psalm. It is the duty of the christian to

love his enemies; and that duty is plainly taught in other parts of the word of God. But it is not what the Holy Spirit teaches in this psalm, the Holy Spirit denounces the divine displeasure against the impenitent, and particularly against Judas, in relation to whom our Lord declares, it had been good for that man if he had not been born. And I would ask, has any man a right to give us a psalm in which love to enemies is taught, instead of an inspired psalm, in which the Holy Spirit gives us a revelation of the wrath of God against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of man? Is it not a practical condemnation of what God has done, and a presumptuous setting up of our wisdom in opposition to the wisdom of God?

The 119th psalm, is in some respects the most remarkable one in this collection of sacred songs. It is much the longest in the whole collection, and there is more art or contrivance in the arrangement, than appears in any other psalm. It is divided into twenty-two parts, corresponding with the letters of the alphabet; and every verse in each particular part, begins with the same Hebrew letter. A very competent judge has said, that "the psalm may be considered in a special manner, as the touchstone of genuine experience; and as far as any man's views, desires, purposes and affections, coincide with those of the Psalmist, he may be sure that they come from the influence of the sanctifying Spirit, but no further."* To this psalm Dr. Watts has prefixed this remarkable note: "I have collected and disposed the most useful verses of this psalm, under eighteen different heads, and formed a divine song on each of them; but the verses are much transposed to attain some degree of connec-

* Dr. Scott.

tion." Can it be, that the man who employed such language, regarded this psalm as the production of the Spirit of infinite wisdom? Does this psalm contain the precious truths of God, and yet shall a sinful mortal select such verses as he considers "most useful," and pass over the remainder as unworthy of notice? Is this remarkable psalm the work of God's Holy Spirit; and yet, is the mind of the Spirit exhibited so awkwardly as to render it necessary that the verses should be "much transposed to attain some degree of connection?" I appeal to the sober judgment of all reflecting men, while I say that it would be an indignity to any respectable man, to treat his writings in the way in which Dr. Watts, according to his own statement, has treated this admirable portion of the word of God.

The reader will now perceive clearly, that according to his own account of them, Watts' Psalms are not a version of the songs contained in the book of Psalms. "Some whole psalms," he observes, "I have entirely omitted, and large pieces of many others;" and out of the remainder he has chosen "such parts only," as he considered suitable. They are consequently not inspired songs, but are Watts' Psalms. They contain his views of divine truth; and in them he teaches the Psalmist to speak what he considers "the common sense of a christian."

It may be proper here to notice a question, which is sometimes proposed to us by our brethren, who employ in the worship of God, songs which have been composed by uninspired men. Say they, "You are accustomed to explain the psalm before it is sung by the congregation, why then do you not use the psalms of Watts, in which the songs of inspiration are already explained?" To this I reply,—

1. We can by no means admit, that Dr. Watts has given a correct explanation of the psalms. For example, in the 109th psalm, we have an exhibition of the awful doom which awaits the finally impenitent enemies of the Lord Jesus. "Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame, and let them cover themselves with their own confusion as with a mantle." But Dr. Watts gives us, instead of this, "Love to enemies, from the example of Christ." This is not only not an explanation of the psalm, but something very different from it.

2. But even if this difficulty were removed, and it were admitted that Dr. Watts has explained correctly those portions of the book of Psalms, which he has retained, still we dare not put a human explanation in the place of the word of God itself. Human explanations, where they are judicious and correct, may aid us in acquiring a proper knowledge of the word of God; but still the word of God itself is the foundation of our faith. It will be admitted that Henry and Scott, and other expositors, have explained very satisfactorily many parts of the Bible. But where is the christian who would consent to have a chapter cut out of his Bible, and the exposition of the best commentator who ever wrote, introduced in its place? Why, then, does any one ask us to take a human explanation of an inspired psalm and use it instead of the psalm itself, in the worship of God? To such a request we could not accede, without offering criminal disrespect to the word of God.

But if it be an impropriety, as I trust every candid reader will admit, to represent Watts' Psalms as a version of the book of Psalms, it is no less improper to denominate the version which is now used by those who plead for an inspired psalmody, "Rouse's psalms."

And as this is a matter which it is important that the reader should understand correctly, his attention is requested, while I endeavor to place it in its true light. That the sacred Scriptures should be translated into the language of every people to whom the gospel comes, is a received principle of the Protestant church. And as the Psalms, were written in poetry in the original language, there is at least a propriety, in making a poetic translation. As there have been various translations of the Scriptures into the English language, some of them more and others of them less correct, so have there been likewise, various poetical versions of the book of Psalms. In the reign of Edward VI, the version of the Psalms, by Sternhold and Hopkins, was introduced. About a century after, during the sitting of the Westminster Assembly, the Parliament called the attention of this venerable body, to the subject of preparing and recommending an improved version for the use of the church. Accordingly, a version of the Psalms which had recently been prepared by Francis Rouse, was "carefully perused, altered and amended," by this learned and pious Assembly, and recommended as suitable to be employed in the worship of the church.* After receiving the recommendation of the Westminster Assembly of divines, this version was brought before the church of Scotland. And after being examined with particular care by her different Judicatories, it was finally, in the year 1649, adopted by the General Assembly of the church of Scotland, as being "more agreeable to the original text," than any version heretofore prepared. This version, then, the reader will perceive, is a translation of the songs of inspiration. It is not a human

* Neal's History of the Puritans, vol. 3, p. 317.

explanation of the word of God, but, it is a rendering of the word of God, which was given in Hebrew poetry, into English poetry. And it was originally adopted by the church upon the principle, that after being carefully examined by men mighty in the scriptures, and skilled in Hebrew learning, it was found to be a more faithful version, than any heretofore in use. And it is still retained in the church, because, as a true and literal translation of the original, it is decidedly superior to any other in the English language. It is now nearly two centuries, since this version was adopted by the church of Scotland; and it would be strange indeed, if it did not contain some antiquated words and phrases. Nor would it be reasonable to expect, in such an ancient production, that smoothness and polish, characteristic of modern verse. But if it cannot lay claim to those embellishments which might recommend it to a fastidious taste, its plainness and simplicity, and its scripture language and sentiment, should render it acceptable to every one who loves the word of God. But no one pretends that this version, any more than the received translation of the Bible, is perfect. All expositors of the Bible, occasionally suggest amendments to the vulgar translation; and yet, the different branches of the church receive the scriptures in this translation, as the word of God. And if the book of Psalms, in the prose translation, deserves to be regarded as the word of God, the mere English reader may satisfy himself, that the metrical version possesses substantially the same character. Not only is there, generally, an exact coincidence in sentiment between the metrical version and the prose translation, but to an extent which is truly remarkable, the metrical version retains the very words of the prose, somewhat differently arranged for the sake of

rhyme. In conclusion, then, I must be permitted to say, that there is no foundation whatever for the insinuation, that we are the advocates of "Rouse's Psalms." The insinuation is uncandid and unjust. We plead for the use of the songs of inspiration. And as the metrical translation originally prepared by Sir Francis Rouse, amended and adopted by the Westminster Assembly, and further amended by the General Assembly of the church of Scotland, is believed to be the most correct and faithful which has yet been provided, we make use of it in preference to all others. And we cannot use Watts' Psalms, because they are his views of divine truth, and are not in any proper sense of the word a translation of the book of Psalms. They are not the songs of inspiration, in which God teaches his church how to praise, but they are the productions of a man who presumes to teach the Psalmist, who was under the guidance of the Spirit, "to speak like a christian."

CHAPTER X.

An Examination of an Argument in Support of the Cause of an Uninspired Psalmody, drawn from Analogy.

The reader may remember, that in our second chapter, we adverted to an argument which the advocates of evangelical hymns composed by uninspired men, sometimes employ, which is drawn from prayer. They observe, that all with one consent admit, that in prayer it is proper to use our own language, in framing our petitions before the throne of grace. No one will pretend that we are bound to employ the precise language of scripture, when we come before God, to pour out our hearts in prayer and supplication. All that is necessary, is that we employ language which is in accordance with the word of God. And from this principle, which we admit to be correct, our brethren argue, that we have the same liberty in preparing our songs of praise. The matter of our songs should be taken from the sacred Scriptures, but we may express them in our own language. This is the principle for which the venerable author of the "Inquiry" contends. His position is,—“As we use our own language in prayer, so may we in praise.”

This reasoning is plausible, and is well adapted to influence minds, whose views of propriety are regulated rather by considerations of human prudence,

than by the authority of God. And if the question with regard to the validity of this conclusion, were submitted to the tribunal of human wisdom, a favorable decision might be anticipated. But we have already had occasion to remind the reader, that in matters connected with the worship of God, the decisions of human wisdom are often found to be at variance with the divine appointment. The wisdom of this world, is foolishness with God. The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

However plausible this argument may appear at first view, a little examination may satisfy the honest inquirer after truth, that it is entirely fallacious. The things which are compared, are dissimilar, and consequently the reasoning is inconclusive. Prayer and praise agree in one particular, and that is, they are both ordinances of religious worship. But in almost every thing else, they differ. And therefore, it is a pure assumption to say, that because we may employ our own language in prayer, therefore it is proper to compose in our own language our songs of praise to God. Not only are these religious exercises different in their nature, but, that God himself regards them in a different light, is evident from the fact that he has made provision for his church in the one case, which he has not in the other. But that the reader may see more satisfactorily the difference between these divine ordinances, and the absolute necessity for provision in the one case, which is not necessary in the other; and consequently the fallacy of the conclusion which is drawn by those who reason from the one ordinance to the other; let us notice a little more in detail, some particulars in which they differ.

1. In prayer, we come to God to ask for those things which we need; but in praise, we ascribe to

him the glory which is due unto his name. As our situation and circumstances are ever varying, our wants are very different at one time, from what they are at another. Our petitions must consequently be framed in accordance with our wants. But God is unchangeable, and his praise is always the same. That glory which is proper to be ascribed to his name at one time, will always be proper. No matter what may be our situation; whether we may be in prosperity or in adversity; whether we may be the subjects of joy or of sorrow, still God is to be praised for what he is in himself, and for the exhibitions of his glory which he has made in the works of creation, of providence, and of redemption. And what ascriptions of glory are due to him, the Spirit of God has declared in those psalms and hymns and songs, which are the productions of his infinite wisdom.

2. In social prayer, one leads in the exercise, while others follow and unite with him in presenting their supplications before the throne of grace; but, in praise, all simultaneously lift up their voices together in extolling the name of God. And hence it results, that in the exercise of praise, a written form is absolutely necessary, while in prayer, such form is unnecessary. And hence, as our songs of praise assume a character of permanency, which does not belong to our prayers, we can see an important and obvious reason, why provision should be made for our assistance in the performance of the one duty, which was not considered necessary in the other. And in connection with this consideration, I remark,—

3. That since, in singing God's praise, a written form is necessary, there is provided for the church, in the word of God, a book of Psalms, while there is no book of Prayers. This is a fact which deserves

special attention. The infinitely wise God, does nothing in vain, and never works without design. From every part of the word of God we learn that it is our duty, both to pray to him and to sing praise to his name. And while the duty in both cases is perfectly plain, it is no less evident, that God has made provision with regard to the performance of the one duty, which he has not thought proper to make with reference to the other. Not only are we commanded to sing psalms, but a book of Psalms which contains the songs of the Spirit of purity, of love and of grace, is provided for our use. Men may say, that "as we use our own language in prayer, so may we in praise;" but the fact that God has himself provided for us a book of Psalms, while he has given us no book of Prayers, rebukes the unwarranted assertion. And from the provision already made for us by HIM who knows the glory which is due to himself, there is no need for us to prepare songs of praise, unless we are disposed to adopt the presumptuous principle, that we are more competent to decide what is proper to be employed in praising God, than he himself who is the object of praise. But in relation to prayer, the case is entirely different. While it is plainly our duty to pray, HE with whom is the residue of the Spirit, has not thought proper to provide for us a collection of prayers. And consequently, in complying with the divine command,—“In every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God,”—we must, from the necessity of the case, express our requests in our own language. The reader can, therefore, have no difficulty in perceiving that the cases are dissimilar, and consequently, that it is by no means a legitimate conclusion, that, as we may use our own language in prayer, so may we in praise. But still further,—

4. Our Lord taught his disciples to pray, and gave them an admirable form of prayer, with reference to which he has said, "After this manner pray ye." But he gave his disciples no divine song, as a model of praise, according to which they were to compose their songs, with a direction, as in the case of prayer, to sing after this manner. And why, with reverence I would ask, did not the great Prophet of the church, furnish in the New Testament a book of sacred hymns, or direct some one of his Apostles to perform this service? The only rational answer which can be given to this inquiry, is, that he did not consider it necessary. He had already raised up a sweet Psalmist of Israel, whom he had qualified for the work, and by whom he had provided for his church, such a collection of psalms and hymns and songs, as to his infinite wisdom and goodness seemed proper.

And with regard to the difference between these two religious duties, I observe once more,—

5. That as provision has been made in the case of praise, which has not been made with regard to prayer, so there is a promise of divine help in the performance of the duty of prayer, which is not given in relation to praise. It is graciously promised by Him who is the hearer of prayer,—“I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications.”* And as the christian needs assistance in performing the duty of prayer, for which provision has not yet been made, we find it written,—“The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”†

* Zech. 12 : 10.

† Rom. 8 : 26.

Here then, we see that the God of grace, who knows what the christian needs, has graciously promised divine assistance to direct us in the expression of our requests in prayer: "We know not what to pray for as we ought; but the Spirit helpeth our infirmities." We have no book of Prayers, in the use of which we may make our requests known unto God; but we have the promise of the aid of the Spirit of grace and of supplications, to help our infirmities, and to instruct us how to pray. But there is no promise in all the New Testament, of the aid of the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of psalmody, to aid us in preparing our songs of praise. He, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, did not think proper to raise up, under the gospel dispensation, a sweet Psalmist of Israel, to provide for the church a system of songs, as he had formerly done; nor did he commission any of his Apostles to perform this service; nor did he promise to send his Spirit in any subsequent age, to qualify any man for the execution of a work of such importance. And why not? The only satisfactory answer which can be given, is that such a service was unnecessary, since it had already been performed.

It is then quite manifest, not only, that prayer and praise are religious duties, which are different in their nature, but that God himself regards them as so different, that in his infinite wisdom he has thought proper to make that provision for the use of his church in the one case, which he has not in the other." It is no valid objection to our reasoning to say, that some of the psalms are termed prayers; that the language of prayer is employed throughout the psalms; and that in prayer we ascribe praise to God. All this may be true. In these particulars and in others which might be mentioned, there may be a coincidence be-

tween these two exercises of religious worship. But still, it remains true, that prayer and praise are not only two different ordinances, but that God regards them as different; and has made provision to aid us in the performance of the duty of praise, which he has not furnished for our assistance in prayer. And consequently, to say, that since it is proper in prayer to use our own language, therefore it is right to do the same in singing God's praise, is to reason after the manner of men, but not in accordance with the wisdom of God.

In this connection, it may be proper to examine the character of a sentiment which is sometimes advanced by the advocates of an uninspired psalmody, and which it is supposed tends to show the impropriety of using at least some of the songs contained in the book of Psalms, and the propriety of providing others better adapted to the present circumstances of the church. Dr. Watts, in his "Essay for the Improvement of Psalmody," makes the following remarks, with regard to "the true method of translating ancient songs into christian worship:" "Psalms that are purely doctrinal, or merely historical, are subjects for our meditation, and may be translated for our present use with no variation, if it were possible; and in general, all those songs of Scripture, which the saints of following ages may assume for their own: such are the 1st, the 8th, the 19th, and many others. Some psalms may be applied to our use by the alteration of a pronoun, putting *they* in the place of *we*, and changing some expressions which are not suited to our case, into a narration or rehearsal of God's dealings with others. There are other divine songs which cannot properly be accommodated to our use, and much less assumed as our own, without very great alterations; namely,

such as are filled with some very particular troubles or enemies of a person; some places of journeying or residence; some uncommon circumstances of a society, to which there is scarcely any thing parallel in our day or case." Here it is maintained, that many of the songs of inspiration cannot be properly accommodated to our use, without very great alterations; because they do not apply to "our day or case," and consequently cannot be asumed as our own. The principle is then taken for granted, that our songs of praise to God should contain such language and sentiments as we may assume as our own. Though the venerable author of the "Inquiry," expresses himself somewhat more cautiously, yet I suppose, from what he has said, that his views are substantially the same. Accordingly he maintains that "all that is typical and local in the Psalms, is not suited to gospel worship and praise." And why not suited to gospel worship and praise?" I suppose his answer, with Dr. Watts, would be,—Because such psalms are not applicable to our particular circumstances, and cannot be assumed as our own. Is it then a correct principle, that our songs of praise to God must describe our particular circumstances, and contain such language as we can assume as our own? I have no hesitation in replying, that this is not a principle of the Bible, but one which man has found out; and therefore, if my venerable Father pleases, he may class it with "human inventions."

It will, I suppose, be admitted by all sober men, that the songs contained in the book of Psalms, were adapted to the use of the church at the time when they were originally composed. I cannot see how this can be questioned, unless we deny that they were given by inspiration of God. Let us then inquire, whether there are not many psalms, the language of which the

believer of old could not assume as his own. For example: Could any believing worshipper, under the legal dispensation, assume as his own the following language: "All they that see me, laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip; they shake the head saying, He trusted on the Lord, that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." These words, it is easy to see, could not be assumed by any ancient worshipper, as applicable to himself; for they apply to the Lord Jesus Christ only. And in these words, the Spirit of Christ taught the church of old to sing of the sufferings of the Savior, who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. And the church now under the gospel, can with great propriety, use the same words in singing of the sufferings of Him, who by the one offering of himself has made an end of sin; though no individual believer can assume these words as his own. Were it necessary, it would be easy to multiply examples of this kind. But the example which we have produced, is sufficient to show, that if the language employed in praising God, must be assumed by the worshipper as his own, a large proportion of the psalms which God himself provided for his church of old, could not with propriety be used, even by those to whom they were originally given. In fact, not a single psalm in the whole book, which describes the experience of the true believer, can be selected, the language of which each individual, in any worshipping assembly, could assume as his own, and as descriptive of his present experience. That language which appropriately describes

the situation and experience of one believer in the assembly of the saints, may not be at all applicable to the present situation and experience of another. And, upon the principle we are examining, no congregation of God's people could unite in the use of any system of songs, neither that which is contained in the book of Psalms, nor any of those which have been prepared by uninspired men. But the principle which maintains, that in singing the praise of God, we may use those songs only which describe our own experience, and the language of which we may assume as our own, has its origin in the wisdom of man, and not in the word of God. So far is it from being a scriptural principle, that I do not hesitate to pronounce it an erroneous principle, and one which is founded in mistaken views of the nature of praise. It would be absolutely wrong to assume as our own, the language of the songs of inspiration, because it is not our own. It is the language of the Spirit of God; and to assume it as our own, would be to incur the guilt of taking as our own, that which we have no right to call our own. These songs are the word of God. In some of them, the Spirit of God describes the exercises of the believing soul; and we may apply the language which they employ, for the purpose of self-examination. At one time we see the believer in the depths of distress, and hear him exclaiming under spiritual desertion, "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? For ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" But may not one, whose privilege it is to rejoice in the light of God's countenance, praise God acceptably in the use of this language, though not applicable to his present experience? At another time, we see the believer rejoicing in hope, and hear him give utterance to the gratitude of his heart, saying, "Great is thy

mercy toward me, and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell." And may not a believer who is in darkness and distress, be edified himself, and perform an acceptable service to God, in singing this language, though it is descriptive of a situation very different from his own? In some of the psalms, we have the most precious promises of support in the time of trouble; of grace to help us in the time of need; of pardon of sin; of peace with God, and such like. And it is both our privilege and our duty to appropriate to ourselves these invaluable blessings, which are presented to us in the divine promises. And the blessings which are conveyed to us, in these promises, the believer appropriates to himself upon the authority of God's word. The songs of inspiration then, let it be kept in mind, are the word of God. The language which they employ, is not to be regarded as ours, but, as it is in truth, the word of God. The songs are a part of that Scripture in relation to which it is said "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness." And if they are sung in the exercise of faith as the word of God, and not as containing language which we may assume as our own, God will be glorified and we will be edified. The language of the songs of the Spirit is not, then, to be assumed as our own, but is to be applied and improved as the language of other portions of the divine word, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.

But we have said, that the principle which is under consideration, is founded in mistaken views of the nature of praise. What is the specific design of this religious exercise? The language of prayer is often employed in the songs of inspiration; and the difficul-

ties, perplexities and deliverances of the believer, are often described in them by Him who knows what is in man. But the specific object of praise, is to ascribe to God the glory which is due unto his name. He surely knows what ascriptions of glory are due to him from his church. In these songs which are the productions of his infinite wisdom, his glory is celebrated as manifested in the works of creation, of providence and of redemption; in his works of mercy toward his church, and of judgment toward her enemies. And the God of Zion calls upon his church in these songs, to sing unto the Lord, to bless his name, to shew his salvation from day to day, to declare his glory among the heathen, and his wonders among all people.

But it is more particularly to those Psalms in which there are allusions to the typical institutions of the law, that the author of the "Inquiry," in his remarks, has reference. And if I understand his language, he not only intimates that such Psalms are not suited to gospel worship and praise, but that the use of them has a tendency to introduce a "Judaizing christianity." His language to which I more particularly refer, is the following: "It is something like an insult to the human understanding, in this age of the world, to say, that those parts of the Psalms which are typical, are as well suited for praising God, as various portions of the New Testament. It is saying that the type is as clear as the thing typified." But he adds, that it is well known that "every thing typical under the Jewish dispensation, is called the shadow of good things to come." If the language which our author here employs, is to be understood in its ordinary acceptation, he maintains that some parts of the book of Psalms, are among "the shadows of good things to come," which have long since vanished away.

And consequently, that it would be just as improper to use them in the worship of God, under the Gospel, as it would be to offer a lamb in sacrifice to God, or to observe any other typical institution. For the sake of illustration, we may refer to one of the Psalms to which he himself has directed our attention. "I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams; I will offer bullocks with goats." It is quite manifest, that upon the principle which maintains that the worshipper must assume as his own the language of his songs of praise, this Psalm could not now be used in the worship of God. For we do not now offer unto God burnt sacrifices of fatlings; nor would it be proper to present such offerings unto the Lord. But here lies the mistake. The language of this Psalm is not our language; nor are we to assume it as our own. It is the language of the Spirit of God; and in employing it in praising God, it is our duty to look to its author for his gracious influences, to enable us to understand it and use it in a proper manner. And taught by the Spirit of grace and truth, the humble christian, while he praises God, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, shall be enabled to make melody in his heart to the Lord.

CHAPTER XI.

Exposition of Col. 3 : 16, 17. Import of the phrase, The Word of Christ—meaning of the Exhortation, Teaching and admonishing one another.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom ; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”
COL. 3 : 16, 17.

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul ; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart ; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever ; the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold ; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.” Such is the language in which the enlightened believer describes the varied excellencies of the word of God, his high esteem of it, and the holy pleasure which he derived from meditation upon its precious truths. This blessed word gives light to the understanding, and it imparts joy to the heart. It directs the humble inquirer into wisdom’s ways, and it fortifies him against

the power of those temptations which would lead him into forbidden paths. It purifies the affections and elevates them above those enjoyments of time and sense which cannot satisfy the desires of an immortal spirit. And, therefore, the soul which has once tasted the sweetness of those streams which issue from this fountain of living waters, will be prepared to say, "Thy word, O Lord, is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it." In the estimation of such an one, the injunction of the Apostle will be regarded as imposing an agreeable obligation; "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom."

To the proper understanding of these words, it will be requisite to determine,

I. What is the meaning of the phrase, "the word of Christ?"

II. What is the nature of the duty here enjoined, "Teaching and admonishing one another?"

I. With regard to the phrase, "the word of Christ," it may be remarked, that it is employed no where else in the sacred Scriptures. There is, however, another phrase, "the word of God," which is of frequent occurrence; and these two forms of expression convey substantially the same idea. In the discharge of the duties of his ministry, our Lord preached *the word of God*. And, accordingly, it is said that, as he was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee, the people pressed upon him to hear "the word of God." Luke 5:1. A similar representation is given of the preaching of the Apostles,—“They spake the word of God with all boldness.” Acts 4:31. The sacred historian informs us that “Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.” “And when the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent

unto them Peter and John." That which was preached by our Lord and by his Apostles, must of course be regarded as the word of Christ. But it is represented as the word of God. And hence these two forms of expression, the word of Christ, and the word of God, are to be considered, as of the same general import.

In a general sense, these two phrases may be understood to comprehend the whole of divine revelation. Jesus Christ is the great Prophet of the church, who has revealed to man the will of God. And the whole of the divine revelation is "the word of Christ."

In a sense somewhat restricted, the word of God, or the word of Christ, may be regarded as of the same import with the gospel, signifying more especially those doctrines relating to the way of man's salvation through Jesus Christ. But to limit this phrase, as here employed by the Apostle, so as to make it designate the writings of the New Testament, in contradistinction from those of the Old, is evidently unwarranted for two obvious reasons.

1. The prophets of the Old Testament were as truly inspired by the Spirit of Christ, as were the Apostles. And hence the Apostle Peter, speaking of the ancient prophets, says that they searched diligently, "what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them, did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory which should follow." And the Church, which is composed of Jews and Gentiles, is said to be "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone." Eph. 2 : 20. If, then, the ancient prophets spake as they were moved by the Spirit of Christ; and if, in the exercise of their ministry, they laid the same foundation as did the

Apostles, then, to restrict the phrase, "the word of Christ," to the writings of the New Testament, is wholly arbitrary and unauthorized. But,

2. The impropriety of restricting the phrase, "the word of Christ," to the writings of the New Testament, appears conclusively from the fact, that only a small portion of these writings as yet existed. According to the most competent chronologers, not more than four or five of the epistles to particular churches were in existence at the time this epistle was sent to the Colossians. These few epistles had not yet been collected into a volume, nor had copies of them, at that time, been multiplied, the art of printing being yet unknown. And it is not probable that the Colossians had seen a page of the New Testament previous to their reception of this epistle. The translation of the Old Testament into the Greek language, which is called the Septuagint, was in the possession of the Jews in their dispersion, and was in common use. But the New Testament, which did not yet exist, they of course had never seen, and probably had no part of it in their possession, before they received from the Apostle this epistle. It would then be absurd to suppose, that in addressing this exhortation to the Colossians, the Apostle could have meant by the phrase, the word of Christ, the Scriptures of the New Testament exclusively, since the writings which compose this book were not as yet in existence.

In so far, therefore, as this exhortation relates immediately to the Colossians, it must be understood as enjoining upon them the exercise of diligence in the improvement of all the means within their reach, to make themselves well acquainted with the will of God as revealed to them. But these words of the Apostle contain instruction for the church in all subsequent

ages, as well as for the Colossians. And the word of Christ, with which it is our duty to make ourselves well acquainted, which should dwell richly in us; which we should study to understand, and in the application of which we should endeavor to edify one another, is the whole word of God, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

II. Our next inquiry is, What is the nature of the duty here enjoined: "Teaching and admonishing one another?" In reply to this inquiry, I remark generally, that these words are addressed, not to the ministry as such, whose business it is officially to instruct the church of God, but to the different members of the household of faith. The duty here specified is not, therefore, one which is peculiar to the public teachers of religion, but which is common to the disciples of Christ. It is supposed, that we have all an interest in each other, as members of one common family, and that we are bound to study the promotion of each other's spiritual welfare. Exhortations of the same general character are of frequent occurrence in the sacred Scriptures. Accordingly, it is written, "Let us follow the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." "Exhort one another daily." "Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works." And Paul says to his brethren of Rome, "I am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of all goodness,

filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." From these and similar portions of Scripture, it is plain that it is the common duty of Christians to admonish and to edify one another. And that they may be properly qualified for the performance of this duty, a familiar and enlarged acquaintance with the word of God is requisite. Therefore, says the Apostle, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom." Let every one be diligent in searching the Scriptures, and in laying up in his mind the precious truths of God's words, so that he may not only experience in his own soul the salutary influence of divine truth, but that he may also be qualified in his appropriate sphere, to contribute to the edification of others.

The import of this exhortation may appear more clearly by comparing it with the language employed in a parallel passage. "Be not drunk with wine," says the Apostle to the Ephesians, "wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." The Ephesian brethren, while in a state of pagan darkness, had been accustomed when celebrating the rites of Bacchus and other heathen deities, to indulge in drinking to excess, and singing lascivious and obscene songs. By these unhallowed exercises, they had formerly encouraged each other in sin. But now, being by the grace of God delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, it became them to walk as children of light. Instead of stimulating each other to the pursuit of sinful pleasures, it became their duty, as the followers of Christ, to provoke one another to love and good works. Instead of striving to inflame each other's passions by filthy communication, or by singing impure songs,

they should study in their social intercourse to engage in such exercises as would tend to promote their mutual growth in grace, and the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The exhortation of the Apostle, with regard to singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, does not appear to refer, primarily at least, to the exercise of praise as a part of the instituted worship of God. It has particular respect to the conduct of the disciples of Christ in their social intercourse. Whenever they meet together, instead of indulging in idle conversation, or engaging in such recreations as might exert a corrupting influence over the mind, they should constantly keep in view mutual edification. Not merely when they assemble for the formal worship of God, but also when they meet to enjoy social intercourse and to cultivate the social affections, all communications of a demoralizing tendency should be carefully avoided; and their "speech should be always with grace, seasoned with salt." And as music exerts a powerful influence over our nature in subduing the passions, in tranquillizing the mind, and in elevating and purifying the affections, when it is employed in connection with proper sentiments; let it be cultivated as a means of rendering our social intercourse as Christians more pleasant and profitable. "In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." It is indeed true, that in singing the praise of God in his instituted worship, our great concern should be to sing "with grace in our hearts to the Lord." But we must not forget, that the Christian should have reference to the promotion of God's glory in every thing in which he engages; not merely when we are engaged in the formal acts of religious worship, but when pursuing our law-

ful avocations; when cultivating social intercourse, and enjoying Christian recreation, the glory of God and mutual edification should be kept steadily in view as the great objects at which we aim. "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Such is the Scriptural rule for the government of Christian conduct. And hence, when Christian friends engage in religious conversation, or when they read the Scriptures or some instructive author for mutual improvement, or when they unite in singing sacred songs for Christian recreation, they should study to have their affections rightly attuned, and to do all to the glory of God.

From the remarks which have been made, it is hoped that it will appear to the reader's satisfaction that "the word of Christ," cannot, by any correct principle of interpretation, be restricted to the writings of the New Testament, in contradistinction from those of the Old; and that, while the phrase is strictly applicable to the whole system of divine revelation, it may be regarded as having a more particular reference to the doctrine of salvation through Jesus Christ, as taught in the Oracles of truth.

It has also appeared that the exhortation of the Apostle, with regard to "teaching and admonishing one another," is addressed not to the ministry as such, but to the different members of the household of faith generally; and that this exhortation consequently indicates a duty, which is not peculiar to any one class, but is common to all the followers of Christ, who in all their social intercourse are under obligations to study the promotion of their mutual edification.

And it has further been supposed, that the direction here given by the Apostle with regard to "singing," does not relate primarily to the exercise of praise as

a part of the instituted worship of God, but to the singing of sacred songs for mutual edification and for Christian recreation. And the conclusion to which this view of the subject would lead, is, that if Christians, when associated for mutual edification and Christian recreation, should sing such sacred songs as are adapted to excite in the mind just and reverential thoughts of God, and to produce and cherish holy affections, much more should they employ such when engaged in the formal exercise of singing praise to God.

But the question here arises,—To what does the Apostle refer when he employs the terms, “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs?” Various attempts have been made by expositors to designate the distinction between the compositions indicated by these different terms. There seems, however, to be no means of arriving at any certain conclusion. And the probability is, that, while there is doubtless a shade of distinction between them, these different terms indicate sacred songs, which are substantially the same. Between them there is probably about the same difference as exists between the terms, laws and statutes and judgments, in application to the word of God.

But still the Apostle must have had some particular design in employing these different terms; and it is to be supposed that the Colossians would understand to what he referred. To what, then, may we suppose, did the Apostle refer, when he directed the Colossians to teach and admonish one another in “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs?” In reply to this inquiry, I would say, that it is well known that there were in existence such sacred songs. There was at that time in the possession of the church, a book of divine songs, which constituted a part of the

word of God, or the word of Christ. And in the Greek translation, called the Septuagint, which was then in common use, we find the very terms which are here employed. In some of the titles prefixed to the psalms, we find one of these terms; in others, two of them; and in the title of the 76th psalm, all three occur. And from the fact, that these different terms are applied to the same psalm, the opinion seems to be confirmed, that whatever shade of distinction may exist between them, they are substantially of the same import. But what the reader is particularly desired to notice is, that when this direction was given to the Colossians, they had in their possession such divine songs as are here mentioned. They are exhorted to teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; and we know that they had such in their possession, which were the productions of the Spirit of inspiration. And if any songs are worthy of the epithet, "*spiritual*," surely it is appropriate to those which are the songs of the Spirit. Such sacred songs, we know, were in existence; such were then in the possession of the Colossians; and to such we believe the Apostle referred. If any choose to deny this, let them produce those to which the Apostle did refer. Until this is done, we must believe that the Apostle did refer to what we know was actually in existence.

It is well known that this passage of Scripture is regarded as having an important bearing on the controversy respecting psalmody, and has been produced as authority for the use of what men choose to call an "evangelical psalmody." Having given what I believe to be a correct exposition of the words, I shall now state, and endeavor candidly to examine the argument in favor of an "evangelical psalmody," in op-

position to what I term an inspired psalmody. And to prevent any misconception, let me explain what I mean by an *inspired psalmody*. We have in the sacred volume, a collection of psalms, hymns and songs, in the book of Psalms. These divine songs, not merely as to their matter, but as divine songs, were given by inspiration of God, and in a correct translation are the word of God. These songs constitute an inspired system of psalmody. But in modern times, since the Spirit of inspiration has ceased in the church, various poets, among whom Dr. Watts occupies a prominent place, have composed hymns and songs on religious subjects. The matter of these compositions, their authors, in the exercise of their own powers, have collected from the sacred Scriptures, and arranged in such a manner as to express their own views of divine truth. These are uninspired hymns. Whether the sentiments which they express may be strictly conformable to Scripture or not, as hymns, they are not found in the word of God; as hymns they are not inspired, but are the compositions of uninspired men.

In a volume introduced to the Christian public by the recommendation of the Presbyterian Synod of Pittsburgh, and which may be supposed to speak the sentiments of that very respectable body, a four fold argument in favor of an uninspired system of psalmody, is founded upon these words of the Apostle. In the volume referred to, we find these words, "We have now produced an apostolic precept or command for a gospel psalmody in four distinct arguments, deduced from Col. 3: 16, 17. 1. From the sixteenth verse, viewed in connection with 2 Tim. 3: 16. 2. From the phrase, "the word of Christ." 3. From the necessary meaning of the word teaching, in the sixteenth verse. 4. From the apostolic injunction, that what-

soever we do, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Let us now endeavor to weigh these arguments carefully, in the balances of the sanctuary.

1. The first argument is founded upon Col. 3: 16. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly:" taken in connection with 2 Tim. 3: 16. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." The reader will keep distinctly in view the point to be proved. It is not, that it is our duty to *sing* "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." In relation to this matter there is no dispute. The point to be established is simply this, is there a divine precept authorizing and requiring uninspired men to compose psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, to be employed in the worship of God. It is argued that there is such a precept, and here we are told is the proof: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another." But does not the reader see at once, that these words are perfectly silent in relation to the point in dispute? There is not a syllable uttered by the Apostle in relation to *making* psalms and hymns and songs; which is the point to be proved. It is the use of psalms and hymns and songs for mutual edification, of which the Apostle here speaks. And his exhortation supposes that they were already prepared, and consequently all that remained for the Colossians to do, was to use in a proper manner those sacred songs which were ready for their use. And that they might be qualified to employ for the purposes of mutual edification and comfort, the songs of inspiration which were then in existence, it was very important that their minds should be familiar with the sacred Oracles. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly."

But though this text (Col. 3: 16) is utterly silent in relation to the precept after which we are inquiring, perhaps the other referred to, may supply the deficiency. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." Is not the reader astonished to find this text of Scripture quoted for the purpose of proving that uninspired men have a precept for making songs to be employed in the worship of God? It is most certainly true, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God." But who denies it? It is undubitably true, that all Scripture is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness." But this is not the point to be proved. We want a text of Scripture, as a precept for uninspired men to make songs to be employed in the worship of God, and the Presbyterian Synod of Pittsburgh refer us to texts which utter not one word on the subject of making songs. Having weighed in the balances the first argument, it is submitted to the reader, whether it is not found wanting?

2. A second argument is drawn from the phrase, "the word of Christ." This argument, in favor of what is termed a "gospel psalmody," proceeds upon the supposition, that the phrase, "the word of Christ, must be understood as referring to the New Testament Scriptures." That this is entirely an arbitrary and unauthorized interpretation, has I trust been satisfactorily proven. A very small portion of the New Testament was in existence at the time this direction was given to the Colossians; and it is not probable that they had any part of it in their possession at the time when they received this epistle. But the book to which I have referred, in which the interpretation is given, may be quoted as authority to prove that the phrase, the word of Christ, is not to be restricted

to the New Testament. Comparing the passage in Col. 3: 16 with that in 2 Tim. 3: 16, it is said, "These two passages are evidently parallels in their general scope and design; the words, all Scripture, answering to the word of Christ." According to this wonderful book, then, which comes before the public with the recommendation of a reverend Synod, the phrase, the word of Christ, must be understood as referring to the "New Testament Scriptures," and yet it is of the same general import with the words, "all Scripture!" The truth is, it matters not whether the phrase be taken in a restricted or more extended sense, in so far as the argument founded on it is concerned. It furnishes, in neither case, any support in favor of the point to be established. For, as has already been remarked, the direction of the Apostle has reference, not to the source whence we are to gather materials for making hymns and songs, but to the proper use of them.

3. The third argument is drawn "from the necessary meaning of the word *teaching*, in the sixteenth verse." The reader is desired to keep distinctly before his mind, the point to be proved: it is, that uninspired men are authorized to compose psalms and hymns and songs, to be employed in the worship of God. And it is argued, that "the necessary meaning of the word *teaching*," establishes this conclusion. The Apostle directs the Colossians to teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. And the conclusion drawn from this direction is, that "the necessary meaning of the word *teaching*," indicates that it was the duty of the Colossians to compose hymns and songs for their mutual edification. To establish the fallacy of the reasoning, I refer to the volume itself, in which this argument

is produced. In speaking of these different terms, psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, the author says, "the Apostle Paul, in our opinion, by *psalms*, alludes to the book of Psalms." If, then, by psalms, we are to understand the sacred songs contained in the book of Psalms, the word "teaching," certainly cannot convey the idea of composing psalms; for they are already composed and given to us to be used. All then that can be meant by "teaching one another in psalms" is, that we should use and apply the psalms for mutual edification. If, then, this is "the necessary meaning of the word teaching," in reference to psalms, it means the same thing in relation to hymns and spiritual songs. As in the former case, it cannot signify composing psalms, it is altogether an arbitrary and unauthorized assumption to say that, in the latter case, it conveys the idea of composing hymns and spiritual songs. The reader will therefore perceive that these words of the Apostle are entirely silent in relation to the point to be proved. We want an argument to prove that uninspired men are commanded to compose psalms, hymns and songs. But we are referred to a passage in which the Apostle is giving directions with regard to the use of psalms for edification, but says nothing at all with regard to the duty of making psalms.

But, independent of this consideration, which shows conclusively the fallacy of the argument, I appeal to the reason and common sense of every reflecting man, while I say that the principle of interpretation on which it rests is perfectly unreasonable. If it is the duty of making or composing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, of which the Apostle here speaks, what then is the necessary conclusion? It is plainly this, that it is a duty obligatory upon all the followers of

Christ to make psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, to be employed in the worship of God. If the reader will open his Bible and turn to the passage, he will see that the Apostle is here speaking, not of what may be done, but of what must be done as a matter of duty. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns." And this exhortation is not addressed to particular individuals, but in common to all the followers of Christ. Those very persons who are addressed in the preceding verses as "the elect of God, holy and beloved," and who are exhorted to put on "bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering and charity," are addressed in the words under consideration. The duty here enjoined is therefore one which is obligatory upon all the followers of Christ. But can any man in the possession of sober reason believe that the Apostle commanded the Colossians as a matter of duty, to make psalms, hymns and spiritual songs? How few of them could possibly have complied with such a requisition? Suppose a command of this kind, addressed to one of the best informed congregations in the present day with all our superior advantages of education; does not every one see, that only an individual here and there could be found who has the requisite talents to comply with such an injunction? Very few, even of the ministry, have the requisite talents to compose a sacred hymn or song, much less are the people, generally, qualified to perform such a task.

In conclusion, then, I would say, that the argument, when weighed in the balances, is found wanting. The Apostle is speaking of the duty of using psalms and hymns and songs for edification, not of making them; and when we consider that the duty here enjoined is

one which is obligatory upon all the followers of Christ, it is perfectly unreasonable to suppose that it is a duty of such a nature that few could possibly perform it.

4. "A fourth argument for a gospel psalmody," and one to which great importance seems to be attached, is drawn from the words, "whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." From the interpretation given of these words in the volume in which this argument is found, is drawn "the obvious inference, that the duty of praising God in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs cannot be discharged in the full meaning of the Apostle, by confining ourselves to the book of Psalms, but in songs recognizing Jesus as the Mediator of the new covenant, and who hath purchased the church with his own blood." It will thus appear that, according to this argument, it is not merely a thing which is allowable, to use other hymns and songs than those contained in the book of Psalms, but that it is a matter of imperative obligation. They who confine themselves to the book of Psalms, are defective in their duty. For we are told that "the duty of praising God in the full meaning of the Apostle cannot be discharged by confining ourselves to the book of Psalms." The songs which we use must recognize "Jesus as the Mediator of the new covenant."

Now, let us try this argument in its application to the book of psalms and hymns, which is at present used by the Synod of Pittsburgh. In this volume there are six hundred and eighty hymns. The subject of the first hymn is the "divine attributes." But in this hymn the name of Jesus is not found; nor is there any reference to Him as the Mediator of the new covenant. The subject of the last hymn is "hell." And here,

again, the name of Jesus has no place, nor is there any reference to him as having purchased the church with his own blood.

Of how many more hymns in this collection the same remark may be made, I am not now prepared to say, nor is it necessary to determine. Here, then, are at least two hymns which, according to the argument under consideration, ought not to be used; for they do not contain the name of Jesus, nor recognize him as the Mediator of the new covenant. If the argument proves any thing in support of the principle in favor of which it is adduced, it proves not only that some of our songs must recognize Jesus as the Mediator of the new covenant, but that this must be true in relation to every one of them. The language of the Apostle is, "*Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.*" If then this argument is worth any thing, consistency requires that the Synod of Pittsburgh should have an *expurgata* edition of their own book of psalms and hymns.

But let us subject the argument to another test. The Apostle is not speaking of the duty of praise alone. The language is general: "*Whatsoever ye do in word or deed.*" This will of course comprehend the duty of prayer. And to aid us in performing this important duty our Lord has given us a form of prayer. But in this form of prayer, which Christ taught his disciples, the name of Jesus does not occur, nor is there a recognition of him as the Mediator of the new covenant. Then, according to the argument we are now considering, the Lord's prayer is not suitable for the use of a Christian!

The truth is, the argument is entirely fallacious, and rests upon an erroneous interpretation of the phrase—"in the name of the Lord Jesus." By a re-

ference to the passage, the reader can at once see that the direction of the Apostle has no particular respect to the duty of praise, but that it is general and comprehends all the duties of the Christian life, incumbent upon us as the followers of Christ. It has respect both to our words and to our actions. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." To perform any particular duty in the name of the Lord Jesus, does not imply that in the performance of that duty we must make mention of his name. If we repeat the Lord's prayer with a proper spirit, it surely will not be denied that we pray in the name of the Lord Jesus. And yet his name is not found in that prayer, nor is there in it a recognition of Jesus Christ as having purchased the church with his own blood. What then is meant by performing any particular duty in the name of the Lord Jesus? In the answer to the 180th question in the Larger Catechism, we find these words, "To pray in the name of Christ, is in obedience to his command and in confidence on his promises, to ask mercy for his sake; not by bare mentioning of his name, but by drawing our encouragement to pray, and our boldness, strength and hope of acceptance in prayer from Christ and his mediation." In so far as the direction of the Apostle may be regarded as having reference to the duty of praise, it relates not to the words or the sentiments of our songs of praise so much as to the spirit or frame of mind with which we should perform the duty. A song of praise may be sung in the name of the Lord Jesus, though the name of Jesus is not found in it. And, on the other hand, an individual may sing a song of praise in which the name of Jesus is often repeated, and yet he may not perform the duty of praise in the name of the Lord Jesus. To perform any duty

of the Christian life in the name of Christ, supposes that there is a reference to his authority as the rule of duty and the exercise of dependence upon his grace for the acceptance of both our persons and services. The argument, then, which infers from the direction of the Apostle—"Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus," that we must sing other songs than those contained in the book of Psalms, and songs which recognize Jesus as having purchased the church with his own blood, is entirely fallacious, being founded upon a misinterpretation of the Apostle's language.

Thus, I have examined the fourfold argument in favor of what men are pleased to call a "*gospel psalmody*," founded upon these words of the Apostle. And I confidently appeal to the impartial judgment of every reflecting reader, while I say that they utterly fail to establish the point to be proved. The duty of *singing* psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, is not questioned; the obligation to edify one another *in the use* of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, is admitted. But the point to be proved is, that uninspired men have divine authority *to make* psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to be employed in the worship of God. The arguments brought forward to establish this point have been weighed in the balances, and Tekel is their indelible brand.

In conclusion, let me say to all who love the truth as in Jesus, and particularly to those who love the songs of Zion above the songs of uninspired men, no matter what may be the piety of their authors, or the evangelical character of their sentiments,—“My beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

CHAPTER XII.

History of Psalmody—Pliny's Letter to Trajan Justin Martyr
—Clemens Alexandrinus—Paul of Samosata—Tertullian—
Athanasius—Chrysostom—Jerome.

The reader will remember, that in a preceding chapter, there was given a brief exhibition of the history of psalmody under the former dispensation. From this historical survey it appeared, that the Scriptures furnish no evidence, that previous to the days of David, the singing of God's praise constituted a part of the regular worship of God. We have evidence that the people of God, individually and in a social capacity, on particular occasions engaged in this delightful exercise. And on such occasions, some one divinely inspired furnished a sacred hymn adapted to the purpose of celebrating the loving kindness of the Lord. But at length in the person of David, "the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob," there was provided for the church, a Prophet to perform the office of a "sweet psalmist of Israel." We have just the same evidence that David was appointed to this office, as that Moses was raised up to be a lawgiver in Israel. The Spirit of the Lord spake by David, and through him communicated to the church a great variety of songs of praise. And not only was this distinguished servant of God

endowed with the spirit of heavenly wisdom to qualify him for the office of preparing sacred hymns for God's Israel, but was also employed in establishing various regulations in the house of God, connected with the worship of God. And from this time forth, the singing of God's praise became not only a regular, but a prominent part of the worship of God.

Previous to the days of David, of course the sacred hymns of the sweet psalmist of Israel, could not have been used, not being yet in existence. But that same Spirit who spake by the mouth of David employed others, to perform the important office of furnishing a song of praise, as the occasion required. The Scriptures, however furnish no evidence whatever, that the church ever employed in the worship of God, the effusions of uninspired men.

Subsequently to the days of David, after the singing of praise became a part of the stated worship of God, a large and varied collection of sacred hymns was given to the church in the volume of inspiration, under the title of "THE BOOK OF PSALMS." By whom these songs of praise were collected into a book, as it is impossible to determine with absolute certainty, so, it is a matter of no importance. It is enough for us to know, that God has given to his church such a book; and that it is recognized in the New Testament as "THE BOOK OF PSALMS." *

We have also seen, that in the New Testament there is not furnished any collection of hymns; there was not raised up, by the great Prophet of the church, any sweet psalmist to perform the office of preparing songs of praise to be employed in his worship; nor, is there any direction relative to the performance of

* Luke 20: 42.

such a service. The singing of God's praise is recognized as a duty; and we are exhorted to engage in this duty.* But it is in no instance intimated, that it is our duty to prepare hymns of praise to be employed in this part of divine worship. We are directed to search the scriptures. And we all understand this direction as pointing to the duty of examining those sacred writings which God has given to the church as the rule of our faith and life. And for a similar reason, when we are exhorted to sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, we understand that it is made our duty to praise God in the use of those sacred songs, of which the Spirit of the Lord is the author and which are contained in his word.

In the New Testament, we have various examples recorded, in which the servants of God were employed in singing God's praise; but what songs were used we are not particularly informed. It is worthy of remark, however, that every where throughout the New Testament, the sacred writers refer to the book of Psalms, as having respect to the person and kingdom of Christ.† And our Lord after reproving the disciples for the dullness of their apprehension, and their slowness to believe all that the prophets had spoken, graciously opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures; and explained to them particularly what was contained in the psalms concerning himself.‡ There can be no doubt therefore, that the writers of the New Testament considered these sacred hymns as very suitable for the purpose of celebrating the praises of the Messiah.

* Heb. 13: 15. James 5: 13.

† Acts 4: 25. Heb. 1: 8, 10: 5.

‡ Luke 24: 44.

Immediately after the institution and first celebration of the Lord's supper, we are informed that our Lord and his disciples "sung an hymn."* What hymn was sung on this occasion we are not told, and consequently cannot determine with absolute certainty. It is however a well established historical fact, that it was the custom of the Jewish church on the occasion of the passover to sing the great Hallel, or hymn of praise, consisting of psalms 115 and 118 inclusive. † I am aware that some of our modern "wise men" have told us, that "the bible knows nothing of any particular psalm being sung at the passover, nor of any singing upon the occasion at all." And it has been said that, "Where the institution of the passover is recorded in Exodus, there is no allusion to singing of any kind." This is readily admitted. But what then? In the primitive account of the institution of the passover, there is no mention made of the use of wine. And yet, it is a well known historical fact, that in subsequent times, wine was used in the celebration of the passover. And it is further evident that wine was used at the passover which was observed by our Lord and his disciples immediately previous to the institution of the Lord's supper. ‡ And from the fact that our Lord sanctioned this usage of the Jewish church by his example, there is no room for doubt in relation to the divine appointment of the use of wine in the passover; though, the bible contains no record of the fact. Whether the Hallel was sung in connection with the celebration of the passover previous to the period of our Lord's incarnation, is a question of

* Mat. 26: 30.

† Horne's Introduction. vol. 3, p. 306. Ainsworth's Annotations.

‡ Luke 22: 17.

fact, which must be decided by testimony. And the concurrent testimony of those most competent to decide, and whose testimony was influenced by no peculiar views on the subject of psalmody, is in the affirmative. And as our Lord conformed to the usage of the Jewish church in using wine in connection with the passover, the probable conclusion is, that he likewise conformed to similar usage in singing a hymn of praise which has reference to that great work which the ordinance of the Supper is designed to commemorate.

I have somewhere seen a *learned criticism*, in which the writer "waxes bold," and says, "We are not left to supposition in this case. There is no room for it. The language is perfectly plain on the subject. When they had sung an hymn; literally, when they had *hymned*. It is a word that never can be shown to be used in the New Testament, when the book of psalms is evidently meant." Wonderful! The psalms are hymns of praise. The authors of the Septuagint expressly denominate them "the Hymns of David."* Josephus, the Jewish historian, styles them Hymns of praise.† And yet, it seems, that it would not be proper to represent those who use them in the praise of God as singing a hymn! The Greek word here employed and which may be literally translated, "*hymned*," is used in three different instances in the New Testament. It is employed by Matthew and Mark, with reference to the hymn sung by our Lord and his Apostles on the occasion of the passover: by the historian in describing the exercises of Paul and Silas in prison; "They prayed and sang praises

* Psalm 72: 20.

† Josephus' Antiquities, B. vii. chap. 12.

unto God." Acts 16: 25; and by the Apostle in the epistle to the Hebrews; "In the midst of the church I will *sing praise* unto thee." Heb. 2: 12. In this latter instance we have a quotation from the 22nd psalm; so that the word here "evidently" does refer to one of the hymns contained in the book of Psalms; and that it does in the other instances referred to, there is no ground to doubt. One thing however is certain, that it never can be shown, either from the meaning of the word, or from scriptural usage, that it does not refer to the hymns contained in the book of Psalms.

In the history which we have in the New Testament of the labors of those whom our Lord called to preach the gospel, we have no particular information with regard to the manner in which the worship of the church was conducted. The church being yet in its infancy; not yet well provided with places of worship and constantly exposed to persecution, it is not to be supposed that public worship could be conducted in that systematic order which was afterwards introduced. No doubt the primitive ministers, as the missionaries among the heathen now do, often preached the gospel, without engaging either in prayer or praise. But in process of time as churches were organized, and officers were appointed, and the solemn assembly was convened for worship on the first day of the week, as well as occasionally at other times, the religious exercises of God's people would be conducted in a more systematic manner. Let us inquire, in so far as we have the light of history for our guide, what was the practice of the church, in the ages immediately succeeding the time of the Apostles.

The first particular reference to the usages connected with the worship of the primitive christians, to which

I shall call the attention of the reader, occurs in the famous letter addressed by the younger Pliny to the Emperor Trajan. This letter was written during the persecution under Trajan, probably in the year 107. Those who have not access to the Epistles of Pliny, may see the original, with the translation, in Lardner's Credibility, vol 7. The passage in this Epistle with which we are concerned is the following. In giving an account to his royal master of the usages of the christians, Pliny observes that after making inquiry, he learned that, "they were wont to meet together on a stated day, before it was light, and sing among themselves alternately a hymn to Christ as a God, and bind themselves by an oath, not to the commission of any wickedness, but not to be guilty of theft, or robbery or adultery; never to falsify their word, nor to deny a pledge committed to them when called upon to return it. When these things were performed, it was their custom to separate, and then to come together again to a meal which they ate in common without any disorder."

On this extract I would offer the following remarks:

1. The account which Pliny here gives of the worship of the christians, is founded upon information which he had derived from such as had renounced christianity. It is not intimated, that the express language employed by the christians, is here given. But Pliny states in his own language the information which he had obtained. Their fault consisted not in any immorality with which they were chargeable, but simply in conforming to the rites and obligations of a religion which was opposed to all idolatry.

2. It was the custom of these christians to assemble stately on a particular day for religious worship. The first day of the week, or the christian sabbath,

is evidently referred to. And owing to the difficulties of the times, they were accustomed to meet before daylight, that they might escape the fury of their persecutors.

3. When these christians assembled for worship, it was their custom, to sing a hymn to Christ as a God. The original Latin is, "carmen, Christo, quasi Deo, dicere." It has been a matter of doubt with some critics, whether it is praise or prayer to which this expression relates. This doubt has its origin in the fact, that the Latin word *carmen*, may signify a prayer as well as a song; and this doubt is strengthened by the consideration, that Justin Martyr, whose testimony shall presently be produced, in his account of the worship of the primitive christians makes particular mention of prayer, but is silent in relation to songs of praise. However, I am inclined to believe, that the word should be taken in its more common acceptation, and conclude that it is to be understood as having reference to the singing of praise. I am the more disposed to come to this conclusion since I find that both Tertullian in his Apology, and Eusebius in his history, lib. 3. cap. 33, who quote this Epistle of Pliny, understand the words in question as having reference to praise. According to this view, then, the christians in ancient Bythinia, about the beginning of the second century, were accustomed in their religious assemblies to sing a hymn to Christ as a God.

The inference drawn from this historical fact by those who plead for the use of hymns composed by uninspired men is, that, the sacred songs which were sung by these primitive christians were such as had been composed by the brethren in support of the doctrine of our Lord's divinity. But is such an inference legitimate? It will not be denied by any who are

acquainted with the book of Psalms, that these sacred hymns speak of Christ. Nor will it be denied that they bear testimony to his divine dignity and glory. I will not refer to any particular psalm, but to the book of Psalms generally. Christ the Lord of glory, is the great subject of this book. Then with the strictest propriety, it might be said that in singing these psalms, the primitive christians celebrated the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ as a divine person.

But, that circumstance connected with the worship of the primitive christians, which not only excited the surprise, but even aroused the contempt of the pagan world, was that they revered as a divine person, a man who suffered an ignominious death. The doctrine of Christ crucified, was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. Festus, the Roman Governor, speaking of the accusation preferred against Paul by the Jews, observes, that, "they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed; but, had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." The prominent characteristic of christianity, then, in the estimation of the heathen, was, the worship of one whom they regarded as a dead man, but whom the christians affirmed to be alive. And therefore, it was perfectly natural for Pliny to represent what he styles a "detestable superstition," as worship offered to Christ as a God. Though it is not to be supposed that Pliny understood the reference which the psalms have to the divine character of the Messiah; nor that he took the trouble to examine the character of the sacred songs which the christians were accustomed to sing; yet he knew that a peculiarity of the christians was, that they worshipped Christ as a God. And consequently, he

would naturally speak of that part of their worship which consisted in singing hymns, as being offered unto Christ as a God. The conclusion then to which we are conducted is, that there is nothing in this account of the worship of the primitive christians, which in any degree militates against the opinion, that they employed in the worship of God the songs of inspiration; much less, is there any thing to prove that they were accustomed to employ hymns composed by uninspired men,

The next ancient writer, to whom I shall refer, is the distinguished Justin Martyr. About the middle of the second century, Justin addressed to the reigning Emperor, an Apology in behalf of the christians. In this Apology, he refers to the worship of the primitive christians, and among other things observes,—“In all our oblations, we praise the Creator of all things through his Son Jesus Christ, by the Holy Ghost. And on the day of the Sun, as it is called, all the inhabitants both of the city and of the country meet together, when the commentaries of the Apostles or the writings of the Prophets are read as the time will permit. Then when the reading is ended, the President delivers an exhortation with a view to excite to the practice of those important duties inculcated in the word which has been read. Then bread is brought forward, and also wine and water. The President gives thanks, and the bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper, are distributed.” In this account of the primitive worship of the church, there is a distinct recognition of the reading of the Scriptures, of prayer, of preaching the word, and of the dispensation of the Lord’s Supper, as parts of the public worship of God. For the purpose of attending to these exercises of religious worship, christians in the days of Justin, were

in the habit of assembling on what he calls the day of the Sun, which is evidently the first day of the week. Whether he refers to singing as a part of the worship of God, may admit of some doubt. It would seem probable, however, that in the declaration, "In all our oblations *we praise the Creator of all things,*" he refers to the exercise of praising God by sacred hymns. If so, there is nothing said by Justin which would enable us to determine what sacred songs were employed for this purpose. But from all the writings of Justin, and particularly from his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, it is manifest that he understood the psalms generally as testifying to the divine dignity and glory of the Lord Jesus, and therefore very well adapted to the purpose of celebrating his praise.

The next writer to whom I shall refer is Clement of Alexandria, who flourished in the latter part of the second and in the former part of the third century.

In a work of Clement, entitled the Pædagogus or the Instructor, there is a chapter on the subject of "The manner in which we may recreate ourselves at festivals." He expresses his disapprobation of the use of such instrumental music as was common among the heathen, and which was better adapted to inflame the passions than to excite pure affections. Instead of instrumental music he recommends that the voice be employed in singing sacred songs. In support of this recommendation, he quotes the 150th psalm, and in a manner, somewhat fanciful indeed, he explains the terms trumpet, psaltery, harp, organ, &c. as referring to the different members of the body which are employed in vocal praise. In this connection he introduces the famous passage Col. 3: 16, 17. He then observes, "If any of you know how to sing at the sound of the lyre and the harp, let him imitate the

example of that righteous Hebrew king, who gave thanks to God, saying, "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright. Praise the Lord with harp, sing unto him with the psaltery;" in which quotation it will be seen that the reference is to the 33d psalm. After quoting this psalm, he says, "The Apostle calls the psalm *a spiritual song*." From this it is evident that Clement to whom the Greek language was vernacular, understood the phrase *spiritual songs* employed by the Apostle, as applicable to the psalms of David. And further, after referring to the impure songs which the Greeks sung at their festivals, Clement says, "But let such amorous songs be far from us, and let our songs be the praises of God," introducing as an example the 149th Psalm.

On this extract, I would offer two remarks,—

1. This christian Father seems to have regarded the Psalms of David, as well adapted to the expression of that praise, which the christian should ascribe to God; and he does not seem to have felt the necessity for any others more suitable for this purpose.

2. He considered that in singing these psalms the christian complies with the apostolic direction in Col. 3: 16, 17.

Tertullian a Latin writer who flourished about the same time, speaking of the manner in which public worship was conducted in his day, observes, in his Treatise De Anima, "Scripturæ leguntur, Psalmi canuntur, ad locutiones proferuntur." The Scriptures are read, Psalms are sung and then sermons are pronounced. Though there is no epithet here applied to the term psalms, which would enable us to determine with absolute certainty, what sacred songs are meant; yet as the word is used without any qualification, and in connection with the scriptures, there seems to be

no room to doubt, that it is employed in the usual acception, as referring to the songs of inspiration. And this conclusion is rendered more probable, when taken in connection with the fact, that on another occasion, Tertullian refers to the 133d psalm as being sung on the occasion of their festivals. "Vide quam bonum et quam jucundum, habitare Fratres in unum: Hoc, tu psallere non facile, nosti nisi quo tempore cum compluribus cœnas." De Jejunio. See King's "Inquiry into the Constitution of the primitive church." I may here remark, that Augustine, likewise refers to the fact, that this psalm was so commonly sung among the christians, that even those who were unacquainted with the Psalter, were familiar with it. See his Exposition of the 133d Psalm.

There is a passage of history in connection with the life of Paul of Samosata, which has sometimes been referred to, for the purpose of establishing the conclusion that hymns of human composition, were in general use in the primitive age, in the orthodox church, and that it was through the influence of heretical teachers, that the Psalms of David were introduced. It will at once occur to the reflecting christian, that it would be something very strange, if it were really so, that the enemies of the truth, should manifest a partiality for a portion of the word of God, which has always been peculiarly dear to the humble, practical christian. But what are the facts in the case, just referred to? Paul of Samosata, who rejected the doctrine of our Lord's divinity, has been represented as banishing from the church in Antioch "the old church hymns, that spake of Christ as the incarnate word," and as introducing in their stead the Psalms of David, as being better adapted to the promotion of his heresy.

That this portion of history in so far as it stands connected with the subject of psalmody may be set in its true light, I shall present to the reader, an extract from the Epistle of the council of Antioch which condemned the heresy of Paul, together with the Latin translation of the learned Valesius. Our information with regard to this matter is derived from the proceedings of the Council. The original may be seen in Harduin's *Acta Conciliorum* Tom 1, or in the *History of Eusebius* Lib. 8, cap. 30.

ORIGINAL OF THE EPISTLE.

ψαλμους δε τους μεν εις τον Κυριον ημων Ιησουν Χριστον παυσας, ως δη νεωτερους, και νεωτερων ανδρων συγγραμματα εις εαυτον δε, εν μεση τη εκκλησια τη μεγαλη τη πασχα ημερα, ψαλμωδειν γυναικας παρασκευαζων. ων και ακουσας τις φριξειεν.

TRANSLATION OF VALESIIUS.

Quinetiam psalmos in honorem Domini Jesu Christi cani solitos, quasi novellos, et a recentioribus hominibus compositos, abolevit. Mulieres, autem magno paschæ die in media ecclesia, psalmos quosdam canere ad sui ipsius laudem instituit; quod quidem audientibus horrorem merito incusserit.

The scholar who examines the original, will see that the following is a literal translation. Paul "put a stop to the psalms in honor of our Lord Jesus Christ, as though (they had been) modern, and the compositions of modern men, and prepared women on the great day of Easter, in the midst of the church, to sing psalms in honor of himself." It will be seen that this translation differs from that which has commonly been given, simply in the rendering of the par-

ticle $\omega\varsigma$. According to the more common interpretation of the passage, this particle has been understood in the sense of *because*. And hence, Paul is charged with setting aside the psalms which were sung in the church of Antioch, *because* they were modern.

But, to say the least, it is not necessary that we should understand the particle in this sense. According to very common usage, it is employed to convey the idea of comparison or similitude, rather than to signify the reason for which a thing is done. Examples almost innumerable of the following kind, occur in the New Testament. "Be ye wise *as* serpents and harmless *as* doves." Matt. 10: 16. "His raiment was white *as* the light." "If ye have faith *as* a grain of mustard seed." Matt. 17: 2, 20. "He was led *as* a sheep to the slaughter, and *like* a lamb dumb before his shearer." Acts 8: 32. And in Acts 27: 30 it is translated correctly, "*as though*," as I believe it should be in the passage under consideration. In all such instances it will be seen, that this particle is used to convey the idea of comparison between objects which in some respects resemble each other.

Understanding the particle in this sense, as employed by the Council, the charge preferred against Paul is, that he took as much liberty with the psalms, which the church in Antioch had been accustomed to sing, *as though* they had been the compositions of modern men. And the implied idea is, that the psalms which had been sung in that church, were not modern, nor the compositions of modern men, but were the songs of inspiration. And the daring impiety of Paul appeared in this, that he treated the divine songs which celebrate the praises of the Lord Jesus, as though they had been the compositions of uninspired men.

The Council then, according to this view, do not

say that Paul set aside the psalms, which had been sung at Antioch *because*, they were the compositions of modern men, but, *as though*, they had been of this character. This view, it will be seen, accords with the translation of Valesius. He employs the term "*quasi*," as though, to express the sense of the original.

In support of this interpretation of the Epistle of the Council which condemned the heresy of Paul, the following considerations are submitted to the judgment of the unprejudiced reader.

1. The sacred songs, which the church in Antioch had been accustomed to sing, and the use of which Paul of Samosata is said to have abolished, are termed "*psalms*." Neander, it is true, denominates them "the church hymns which had been in use since the second century;" and others describe them as "the old church hymns that spake of Christ as the incarnate word." But the Council speaks of them as the "*psalms*." Now, while I freely admit that this term does not conclusively establish the fact, that these sacred songs were the Psalms of David, yet it furnishes a strong presumptive argument in favor of this supposition. It will, I suppose, be admitted by all who are concerned in this controversy, that this term is more commonly used to designate the Psalms of inspiration, and that it is not the term usually employed in reference to the compositions of uninspired men.

But, perhaps it will be said that the qualifying phrase, psalms "*in honor of our Lord Jesus Christ*," determines that they were songs composed by men for the purpose of testifying to the truth of our Lord's divinity. To this, I reply, that such a conclusion is by no means legitimate. All that appears from the language of the Council is, that the psalms which were sung in Antioch had reference to Christ, and

were in honor of him. Now, if the Psalms of David do bear testimony to the divine dignity and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ; and if they do speak of him as being a divine person, and yet as appearing in our world in human nature; and if the church, in the days of Paul of Samosata, thus understood the psalms, then, it was strictly proper and natural for these advocates of the truth of our Lord's divinity, to speak of the inspired Psalms as being sung in honor of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That the Psalms do celebrate the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ; that they do exhibit him to the view of our faith, as a divine person, and at the same time, as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, it cannot be necessary that I should undertake to prove. It may be sufficient to refer to the numerous instances in which the Psalms are applied to the Lord Jesus, by the writers of the New Testament; and particularly to the declaration of our Lord himself, in which he says to his disciples, Luke 24: 44, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in *the psalms*, concerning me."

And while it is perfectly evident that Jesus Christ, in his person, and work; in his divine dignity, humiliation, sufferings and death; resurrection and ascension into heaven; is the great subject of the Psalms, it is not less evident from the writings of the primitive Christians, that the Psalms were thus understood by them. And this being the fact, it was perfectly natural for them, when speaking of these divine hymns, to represent them as being sung in honor of the Lord Jesus Christ. In confirmation of what has just been said with regard to the sense in which the Psalms

were understood by the primitive Christians, it may be sufficient for my purpose to adduce the testimony of Justin Martyr, who wrote about the middle of the second Century. In his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, in which, the particular design of this learned Father, is to prove that Jesus Christ is the Messiah promised to the fathers, the Psalms, generally, are referred to, as furnishing the proof of his position. For example, Justin quotes the 110th Psalm as applicable to the Messiah. And then addressing Trypho, he says, "I am not ignorant that you Jews explain this Psalm, as though it referred to Hezekiah." But he adds, "The words themselves declare that it relates to our Jesus." After having pointed out clearly the application of this Psalm to the Lord Jesus Christ, Justin addressed Trypho in the following language: "That I may convince you, that ye Jews do not understand your own Scriptures, I will mention another Psalm dictated to David by the Holy Spirit, which you contend was spoken with reference to Solomon, your king, but which, in reality, was uttered concerning our Christ." It is the 72d Psalm to which Justin here refers; and after repeating the entire Psalm, he remarks, "In the conclusion of this Psalm it is written, *the hymns of David are ended.*" And then he proceeds to show that the things spoken in this Psalm cannot apply to Solomon, as the Jews were wont to contend, but do relate to our Lord Jesus Christ.

If, then, the primitive Christians understood the Psalms as referring to the Lord Jesus, as is abundantly evident from the writings of Justin Martyr and others, it was strictly appropriate and natural, when speaking of them, to represent them as being sung in honor of Him. And the language applied to the psalms which were sung in Antioch in the days

of Paul of Samosata, very correctly describes the Psalms of David, as they were understood in the primitive ages of Christianity.

If it were necessary to adduce further proof in confirmation of what has been said in relation to the sense in which the Psalms were understood by the primitive Christians, it would be easy to multiply testimonies from the writings of Ireneus, of Clement of Alexandria, of Athanasius, of Augustine, and others of similar character, who were distinguished advocates of the truth. Indeed, these Fathers instead of experiencing any difficulty in seeing their divine Redeemer in the Psalms, appear from their writings, to have had Him presented to the view of their faith every where throughout these sacred hymns.

2. But that the Psalms, the use of which Paul abolished, were not "the compositions of modern men," and could not have been set aside by him under the pretext that they were "modern," will appear from this consideration: That which he is said to have introduced, would be equally, if not in a greater degree, obnoxious to the same objection. The Psalms which he removed were such as were "in honor of the Lord Jesus Christ;" those which he appointed to be sung in their stead, were "in honor of himself." Now, it is certain that none of the Psalms of David would be adapted to the purpose of celebrating the praises of Paul of Samosata. And it is no less certain that any songs which were in honor of this enemy of the truth, must have been modern, and the compositions of an uninspired man. And though Paul was a heretic, it cannot be supposed that he was so perfectly devoid of common sense, as to urge as a reason for setting aside the existing psalmody of the church, a consideration which would apply with greater force

to the exclusion of what he proposed to introduce.

I am aware, that it has been customary *to suppose*, that Paul introduced the Psalms of David in the room of those which he displaced. Neander says, "he *probably* suffered nothing but Psalms to be used." Others not quite so modest, assert without any qualification, that it was the "pompous Unitarian, Paul of Samosata, who first set the example of installing the Psalms in the place of exclusive dignity?" But where, I ask, is the authority for such conjectures, or for such unqualified affirmations? The Epistle of the Council, by whose authority the heresy of Paul was condemned, says no such thing.

So far from it, the express declaration of the Council is irreconcilable with such a supposition. The psalmody which, according to the Council, Paul introduced, was designed to celebrate his own praise; was in honor of himself. And this could not have been an inspired psalmody, but must have been a system of which man was the author.

The conclusion, then, to which I am conducted, taking the language of the Council as my guide, and not suffering myself to be misled by the mere conjectures and suppositions of men, may be exhibited in the following propositions:

1. The psalmody employed in the worship of God in the church of Antioch, in the days of Paul of Samosata, was a divine system. The psalms which were sung at that time, were in honor of our Lord Jesus Christ. And this character belongs appropriately to the Psalms of David, for they speak of Christ and celebrate his glory.

2. The daring impiety of the heretic Paul was manifested in this, that he took as much liberty with these Psalms, whose author is the Holy Spirit, as

though they had been the compositions of uninspired men.

3. The psalmody which he introduced was designed to celebrate his own praise. He appointed women in the church, on the great day of Easter, to sing songs in honor of himself, the hearing of which was adapted to fill the pious mind with horror.

In the latter part of the fourth century, during the reign of Julian the Apostate, who was a most determined enemy of christianity, and who labored most assiduously to restore idolatry, we have abundant evidence, not only that the psalms of David were in common use, but that all classes of christians were familiar with them; and that they were regarded as well adapted to the existing circumstances of the church. Sozomen in his ecclesiastical History, Lib. V. cap. 19, states that, Julian, when meditating a war against the Persians, consulted the oracle of Apollo, whose Temple was at Daphne. But the oracle gave no response. Inquiring into the cause, he was informed that it was in consequence of the body of a Martyr which was buried in the neighborhood of the temple. Accordingly the Emperor ordered the christians to remove the body. While engaged in this service, the historian informs us, that the christians lightened their labor by singing psalms as they marched in solemn procession. Men and women, young men and virgins, old men and boys sang together in harmonious concert, the 97th psalm, in which these words occur, "Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols." Thus did they not only celebrate the praise of God, but at the same time testify their abhorrence of idolatry, which Julian was laboring to restore.

By this proceeding of the christians, Julian was

greatly incensed, and ordered a young man whose name was Theodorus, to be bound to the stake and subjected to torture. But the young man, so far from being intimidated, and regardless of his bodily sufferings sung at the stake, the *same psalm*, which the multitude had sung on the preceding day.

About the same time, as we are informed by Theodoret in his History, Lib. III. cap. 19. there was a widow of the name of Publia, distinguished for her piety, who presided over an assembly of virgins. As Julian passed by, Publia and her virgins testified their opposition to the worship of idols, by singing in concert those psalms in which the vanity of idolatry is exposed; such as the 115th and the 68th. In his rage Julian ordered the venerable matron to be buffeted on the cheek. But, so far from being silenced, Publia esteemed it an honor to suffer reproach for her religion. And she continued, adds the Historian, "to assail Julian, as she had done before, with *spiritual songs*, imitating him who was the author of them, and who repressed the evil spirit that annoyed Saul." The reader will please to observe, that while we have in this instance evidence of the prevailing use of Davids psalms, Theodoret denominates them spiritual songs.

The next Author to whom I shall refer, is Anthasius, bishop of Alexandria, the able and zealous opponent of Arianism in the fourth century. Among the works of this Father, we have an Epistle addressed to Marcellinus, "Concerning the Interpretation of the Psalms." After expressing his great regard for the Scriptures generally, he says, "Yet the book of Psalms is especially worthy of attention and observation." While this portion of scripture is profitable more especially for one purpose, and that for another, the

Psalms, he observes, contain whatever is to be found elsewhere in the Bible. "The volume of the Psalms, is like Paradise which contained plants of every kind that were good for food." He then goes briefly over the book of Psalms, to show by a reference to particular examples, that no matter what may be the particular condition of the christian, he may here find something adapted to his case.

After having taken a cursory survey of the book of Psalms, he observes, that, "If you desire to sing those things apart from others which relate to Christ you may find such, in every psalm, but especially in such as the following." He then refers to the 45th and 110th, in which, says he, Christ is exhibited as God's own Son; and the 22nd and 69th, which proclaim the cross of Christ and what he suffered for us. He then vindicates the propriety of *singing* the psalms, in opposition to some whom he terms "the more simple," who had taken up a prejudice against singing, as adapted in their view, to gratify the ear, rather than to profit the soul. And in conclusion, he insists upon the propriety of adhering to the plain and simple language of the Spirit in opposition to all meretricious ornaments of style, with a view to make the psalms more acceptable to the carnal and fastidious taste.

The next writer, to whom I shall refer is Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople, who flourished during the latter part of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century. Among his writings, we have an Exposition of most of the Psalms. In common with the early Fathers of the Church, he understands the psalms generally as relating to Christ. In his Exposition of the 110th psalm, he not only shows its application to Christ, but its opposition to the prevailing heresies of that age. Among others he particularly specifies the

heresy of Paul of Samosata. It would appear, therefore, that in the estimation of Chrysostom, the introduction of the psalms of David into the Church, would not be adapted to promote the heresy of this enemy of the truth.

In his Homily on Col. 3: 16, 17, Chrysostom speaks of ignorance of the Scriptures, as the cause of all kinds of evil; from which it appears, that he understood the phrase, "the word of Christ," as referring to the sacred oracles. He inveighs against the indolence of parents and husbands, in leaving the instruction of their households entirely to their pastors, while they neglected to co-operate in the work. He condemns the use of "satanic songs" and sports, in which the youth were wont to indulge, while the sacred songs were neglected. And as an antidote against this evil, he directs those who had the oversight of children to "teach them to sing those psalms which are full of heavenly wisdom." He then prescribes the course to be pursued. "Begin with the first psalm." And then he adds, "When with such as these, you have led the youth from the commencement of life, you may conduct him to loftier themes." He then distinguishes between *psalms* and *hymns*. According to him, hymns are songs of a more divine character, being employed more especially in ascribing praise to God, while psalms relate to matters of christian experience and rules for the government of human conduct. With the particular distinction which Chrysostom makes between psalms and hymns, we have no concern. My object is to show that this eminent Greek writer, who it is to be supposed, understood his own language quite as well as our modern writers on psalmody, regarded the phrase, "the word of Christ," as applicable to the Scriptures; that he un-

derstood the terms psalms and hymns and songs, as applicable to the songs of inspiration; and that, he regarded those as complying with the injunction of the Apostle, who taught such as were under their care to sing these sacred songs.

Our attention shall in the next place be directed to the testimony of Jerome, one of the most learned of the Fathers, who was born A. D. 330 and died A. D. 421. In his voluminous writings, we have abundant evidence, that the Psalms were regularly sung in the fourth and fifth century. Besides a commentary on the book of Psalms, we have Homilies on particular psalms. As a specimen of his views in relation to the principle on which the psalms are to be interpreted, I would refer to his introductory remarks on the 118th psalm.

“In every psalm, the prophet speaks and sings of our Lord Jesus Christ; but especially in the 118th psalm, now read for the purpose of being sung, is the mystery of the resurrection proclaimed. In his Homily on Ephes. v: 19, he observes, “What is the difference between psalms, hymns and songs, may be fully learned from the Psalter.” He then proceeds to give his own views with regard to the distinction between these different terms. It appears therefore that Jerome in common with the other Fathers, understood the terms employed by the Apostle, “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs,” as applicable to the songs of inspiration contained in the book of Psalms.

It appears, however, that in the days of Jerome, as at the present time, there were those who thought that they could compose songs better adapted to excite devotional feelings, than those composed by the sweet Psalmist of Israel. In his tract “Concerning the celebration of the festival of Easter, Jerome incident-

ally refers to the subject of psalmody. There prevailed in the early ages of christianity some diversity in practice with regard to the time of holding this festival. Jerome observes, that with regard to some other things there was a degree of diversity among different churches. "As to the utility of singing psalms and hymns, we have the authority and example of our Lord and his Apostles. Yet for the purpose of elevating the mind and exciting the affections there is some diversity in our modes." And he adds, we in Africa sing the divine canticles of the prophets, while the Donatists inflame the passions by singing psalms composed by uninspired men. The reader will please to observe, that we have here the testimony of Jerome, that the church sung the songs of inspiration, while the Donatists, who were schismatics, were accustomed to sing the compositions of uninspired men.

The writings of Augustine abound with evidence that the Psalms were regularly used in the worship of the church in the age in which he lived. The authorities already referred to, however, have occupied more space than was anticipated. Therefore, without prosecuting the subject further, it is hoped, that the brief sketch which has been given, will satisfy the reader that from the beginning, the songs of inspiration were employed by the church in the worship of God.

CONCLUSION.

The reader has now before him, a condensed view of all that we think it necessary at present, to say on this subject. And it is hoped that he will have no difficulty in understanding the principle for which we plead. It is not for the exclusive use of any particular version of psalms or hymns that we plead, but for the use of those psalms and hymns and songs, which the great Prophet of the church has given us in his own Book. Different versions may be characterized by different degrees of excellence; and the use of that which is now the best, may be superseded in time by another of superior excellence. The Associate Reformed Church makes use of the version adopted by the church of Scotland, in the year 1649, on the principle, that when "diligently compared with the original text," by men who were very competent to decide, it was found to be "more plain, smooth and agreeable to the text, than any heretofore;" and which is commonly called, "Rouse's version." But to call the divine songs in this version, "Rouse's Psalms," as some are pleased to do, is to evidence gross ignorance or something worse. There would be equal propriety in calling the Bible, in our common translation, the Bible of the translators, instead of the word of God.

I repeat it then, the principle for which we plead, is, "The songs of inspiration contained in the book of Psalms in the most correct poetic translation we have." And the great reason we do not feel at liberty to use what are called Watts' Psalms, is because they are not a version of the book of Psalms. As we have already remarked, their author himself has candidly informed the reader, that he has "entirely omitted some whole psalms, and large pieces of many others;" and that he has "chosen out of all of them, such parts only as might easily and naturally be accommodated to the various occasions of the christian life." I desire the reader to observe particularly, that according to the candid avowal of the author himself, "Watts' Psalms of David imitated in the language of the New Testament," are not a version of the book of Psalms. It was the plainly avowed object of the author to modify them in such a manner, that he might teach David "to speak like a christian." We reject the use of these psalms, not because the book containing them, is a version somewhat imperfect, but because it is not a version at all. These are properly denominated "Watts' Psalms;" because they were composed by him, and contain his views of divine truth. "I have not," he says, "been so curious and exact in striving every where to express the ancient sense and meaning of David, but have rather expressed myself as I may suppose David would have done, had he lived in the days of christianity." The one system of songs, then, the reader will observe, we receive, because it was prepared and adopted on the principle of a translation of the songs of inspiration, and is the most correct poetical translation which has yet been prepared. The other system of songs we reject, not because it is in some degree an imperfect translation of the songs

of inspiration, but because it is not a translation at all, but is an exhibition of what the author supposes David would have said, had he lived in the days of christianity.

And as it respects the use of uninspired hymns, our principle is, that in the worship of God, we must be governed, not by human wisdom, not by man's views of propriety, but by divine appointment. And as we find no appointment in the New Testament, authorizing any uninspired man to prepare psalms or hymns, to be employed in the worship of God, we do not consider ourselves at liberty to use those which have been prepared by men, to whom God never gave a commission to perform such a service.

Here then, christian reader, you are called to decide, as one who is accountable to God. He who has made it your duty to sing psalms to his praise, has given you in his word a book of Psalms. This book is the production of the ever-blessed Spirit, and bears upon it, in characters of light, the impress of his own infinite wisdom. It is THE WORD OF GOD. The most that can be said of any other system of psalms or hymns, is, that in the judgment of man, it is agreeable to and founded upon the word of God. Of no other collection of psalms or hymns, can it be said, without daring presumption, this is the word of God. Which of these systems then, christian reader, will you choose; the one which God has provided, or the one which man would give you in its stead?

“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.—AMEN.”