

# The Psalms in Worship

A SERIES OF CONVENTION PAPERS BEARING  
UPON THE PLACE OF THE PSALMS IN  
THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH

EDITED BY

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PITTSBURGH

The United Presbyterian Board of Publication

1907

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PITTSBURGH, PA.

## OBJECTIONS TO THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF THE PSALMS IN WORSHIP

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**T**HERE are a number of these, of various grades of importance, and yet all told they do not vitiate the claim that the Psalms are suitable and exclusive matter of praise.

*First.* The first objection is that the Old Testament appointment of the Psalms as praise has been abrogated. To this may be replied that it is not possible to show it. By common consent the "psalms" of Ephesians and Colossians are those of the Old Testament, and, as has been shown in other papers, "hymns and spiritual songs" are also a part of the Psalter. Their appointment, therefore, has been practically renewed. Nothing else is known to the New Testament as material of praise, whether we speak of the hymn our Lord and His Apostles sang at the institution of the Lord's Supper, or the Psalms the Corinthians were to announce at their meetings, or the alleged remains of hymns in the Epistles. Moreover, what is suitable for praise in one dispensation is in another. God Who receives it does not change. The Psalms are on all hands acknowledged to be the noblest book of praises ever prepared. This is undoubtedly true. Why then should they be set aside? If it is merely meant that additions to the Psalms are now permitted, not only must this fact be shown, but if it were, it would not render the use of the Psalter less obligatory. Practically by most hymn-singers the Psalter is discarded. Yet nothing but the ceremonial and the judicial law of the Jews has by the New Testament dispensation been set aside; the moral law is still binding, and so is the law of praise, which is not simply Jewish, but universal.

*Second.* It is objected that the Psalms are not suitable to New Testament times. This is a strange objection. It would set aside even the reading and preaching of the Old Testament. Our Lord thought the Psalms were suitable, and used them in connection with the chief ordinance of the dispensation. Paul and James also thought they were. The Psalms contain more about Christ than almost any other section of the Scripture, displaying the glorious Person of our Lord, His threefold office, His tenderness and compassion, and the events of His life in great detail. Nowhere else is the heart of Christ so fully unfolded. Here are laid forth the inmost thoughts, sorrows, and conflicts of our Lord. Nowhere else is the divine character so fully exhibited, and so full utterance given to the needy and trustful soul. From the beginning of the Christian Church the Psalms have been the chief vehicle of praise. They have nurtured the most profound and vigorous piety known in the ages. They were the songs of the Reformation periods and of the martyrs. The witnesses for Christ have not gone to their death singing praises in songs made by men, but staying their souls upon their Redeemer by the iron tonic of the praises His Spirit gave to men. Talk about the babbling of hymns when a man is called to lay down his life under the hands of persecuting violence! The wide use of human songs is chiefly modern. The heroic Church of the entire era has been a Psalm-singer, and to-day the Psalms breed a robust piety not inferior to any other of the times. Unless the objector wishes to discount his Lord's example, the precepts of Paul and James, and the great mass of witnesses and confessors of Christ, he had better drop his objection into the limbo of useless things.

Another branch of the same objection is that the Psalms are Jewish, and hence not suitable to our times. One high-spirited divine, in a convention for the union of the Presbyterian Churches, when Biblical Psalmody was proposed, with some asperity dissented, saying, "No, sir, I am not a Jew. I am a Christian, sir, and this is a Christian convention, and the

Churches represented here are Christian Churches." So, because he was a Christian he was not satisfied with the hymns which satisfied Christ. He is a specimen of many good men who misconceive things. Did you ever think of it—all our salvation is Jewish? The Church of the dispensation is on a Jewish model. The Saviour was a Jew. The Apostles were all Jews. The Bible is a Jewish book; from beginning to end there is not a Gentile syllable in it. Even Luke writes his Gospel as he received it from Paul. The mass of the New Testament is touched and colored by the Old Testament, the Jewish Scriptures. What a Jew Peter was in his Epistles! How fully does the Epistle to the Romans follow upon Jewish lines and deal with Old Testament personages and types! Who does not know that the Epistle to the Hebrews is saturated with Jewish thought? Everywhere throughout the New Testament you have altars, and sacrifices, and priests, and prophets, and Jewish history, and Jewish characters, until at the end the grand Revelation closes with descriptions borrowed from the Old Testament prophets, Ezekiel and Daniel. In some of the New Testament Books there is as much distinctly Jewish thought as in the Psalms. However, the objection is not so serious in the minds of our friends as they suppose, judging from their own hymn-books. For example, in one of the Methodist books we find many such words as these:

"Thou very Paschal Lamb,  
Whose blood for us was shed,  
Through Whom we out of bondage came,  
Thy ransomed people led."

"Thy offering still continues new,  
Thy vesture keeps its crimson hue,  
Thy priesthood still remains the same."

Take even old Coronation, v. 3:

"Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,  
Ye ransomed from the fall,  
Hail Him Who saves you by His grace,  
And crown Him Lord of all."

“Our pilgrim hosts shall safely land  
On Canaan’s peaceful shore.”

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“On Jordan’s stormy banks I stand,  
And cast a wistful eye  
To Canaan’s fair and happy land,  
Where my possessions lie.”

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“Here I’ll raise my Ebenezer,  
Hither by Thy help I’ve come.”

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“You daughters of Zion, declare, have you seen  
The star that on Israel shone?  
Say, if in your tents my Beloved hath been  
And where with His flocks He has gone.”

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“The roses of Sharon, the lilies that grow,  
The cedars of Lebanon bow at His feet.”

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“Let us sing the King Messiah,  
King of righteousness and peace.”

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“Shout the glad tidings, exultantly sing,  
Jerusalem triumphs, Messiah is King.”

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“Hallelujah to the Lamb Who bled for our pardon,  
We’ll praise Him again when we pass over Jordan.”

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“Before Thine altar, Lord,  
My harp and song shall sound.”

So it goes, until we almost feel constrained to say, “What Jews these hymn-singers are!” The fact is, all such objections are captious, and are offered for lack of something better. In the light of the New Testament these Old Testament Psalms, all of which refer to the Messiah and His sufferings in the past tense, are as truly “gospel hymns” as the Romans and Hebrews are Books of the larger gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

*Third.* It is said the name of Jesus does not appear in the

Psalter. This is shown to be essentially incorrect, in that He is there called the Anointed, the Son, the Shepherd, and by various other names is *personally* distinguished. His work and mission are fully set forth, and everywhere He is viewed as the God of salvation, or the Saviour of men. It is a strange smallness in argument which insists on five vocal sounds, "Jesus, Saviour," as being necessary to a satisfactory psalmody, when all the fullness of their meaning is displayed in the Book which is refused. Many names of the Saviour are there, and an inspired delineation of His saving work, but these are counted valueless unless a certain vocable, meaning no more, is there found. What is Jesus, the Man of Nazareth, except He be Messiah, discharging the mission of salvation? For what is He Messiah but to save? Why is He revealed as Son but to present Him as Saviour? For what purpose is He presented as Shepherd except to show His care for His people in salvation? And so I might proceed. There is a feebleness of sentimentalism about the character that can haggle over the need of a shadow where there is all the substance which nothing but the tonic of the Psalms themselves can cure.

*Fourth.* It is urged again that hymns are not forbidden, and hence the Psalms are not exclusive praise. Is that the sound principle of worship? Scarcely. It is sound doctrine that we offer the things required. Indeed, a thing required forbids all other things. That was Cain's trouble—he offered a thing not required, and hence forbidden. The worship of the Virgin Mary is not expressly forbidden, only in the same way as hymns, by something else being required. The seven sacraments of Rome are not forbidden. The confessional is not forbidden. Prayer for the dead is not forbidden. The ancient custom of salt in the mouth at baptism is not forbidden. The dissipations of modern life, such as gambling and dancing, are not expressly forbidden. Altars, and vestments, and candles, and bowings, and other mummery of ritualism are not forbidden. Most of these things have yet been introduced into worship. Does the lack

of prohibition make them right? It is not a question of prohibition, but a question of divine commandment. Has God commanded these things in His worship? The doctrine of the Confession and of Scripture is that God must *prescribe* a thing in order to its use as a veritable part of His worship. The question is, Will hymns stand the test? In the light of what has been said it is evident they will not.

*Fifth.* It is said that the singing of the gospel is a very useful exercise, and hence should be allowed in praise, and hence an exclusive Psalmody is not required. Observe: (1) Singing the gospel may indeed be a useful exercise to men, but usefulness to men is not the test of praise to God. (2) Singing the gospel with the purpose of moving men toward Christ, as the evangelists claim, takes the exercise out of the sphere of divine praise. (3) That singing the gospel cannot be praise to God is evident because the gospel is good news to *men*. It was never given from heaven to be sent back as a tribute to the throne. Where is the praise to God in a hymn expounding and applying to a congregation repentance, or faith, or the duty of a resolution to do God's will? People who call this sort of thing "praise service" do not know the use of words. (4) The singing of the gospel with a view to the congregation is but musical preaching of the gospel. Even while it often occupies the place of praises in the sanctuary, it is yet but a preaching service in which we all join. (5) As to the propriety of thus obeying the command, "Preach the Word," nothing directly antagonistic will now be said, but only a few things to shed further light on its bearing upon the ordinance of praise. It may be doubted whether the usefulness of the gospel truth in such hymns is as great as is imagined. The measure of truth in any one song is exceedingly small, and the exercise is always, or nearly always, connected with the manly and clearly Scriptural act of standing up and expounding the Word to the people; so that it is difficult to trace results to the singing. The very most which can with comprehensive truthfulness be said is that such musical exer-

cises illumine and give variety to the occasion, and so prepare the way for the preacher. The office of mere melody in music is benign and helpful to a congregation, without regard particularly to the associated sentiment, the words. It is an attractive adjunct, but not a converting agent. Quite as effective revivals have been held where there was no singing of the gospel, but only preaching by the aid of the Holy Ghost. There were no Sankeys at Pentecost, nor in the early missionary ages of the Christian era, nor in the Reformation period, nor in the great revival of 1859 in Ireland. "Singing the gospel," while not a modern discovery, yet partakes of the emotional and somewhat unsubstantial type of Christian work characteristic of our times. Any work must lack essential marrow that practically and continually drops out the ordinance of praise. Where the gospel is "sung" there is generally little or no praise. God is not so much in mind as men. Even if we concede somewhat of good to the use of "gospel hymns," those who stand for the ordinance of praise in its purity and entirety, as we do, cannot afford to use them in public service, because (a) *they take the actual place of praise to God*, which is robbing Him for men. We must remember the right of the Lord of the sanctuary. The musical service is not alone, as so many think, for developing good feelings in the singer and in the congregation, but also for presenting to God His due. *Praise is worship*. Do not forget it. It is as truly so as prayer. We have as much right to sing the gospel instead of prayer as instead of praise. It is more distinctly an act of worship than any other part of the church service. We must not allow any effort to reach men by the gospel to minimize or supplant the worship offered that Being on Whose blessing all our efforts to save men depend. His benevolence will not yield His dues even to gospel sentiment sung for the benefit of sinners. (b) We cannot afford to use them because *they would take the place of Psalms in the minds of the unthinking*. Inevitably our use of "gospel hymns" would be counted praise and an abandonment of our doctrine of Psalmody. We

might explain until we were weary the difference between "praise" and "singing the gospel," and would fail of popular impression. The pastor who allows his congregation to preach the gospel by singing, or any soloist to do so, thereby in the popular mind abandons Scriptural Psalmody. The thinking minds will recognize the difference, but the mass will not see it. No good is to be gained, therefore, by the practice, but only injury.

*Sixth.* It is objected that we may make prayers, and why not praises? Some observations are here in point. (1) There is a warrant for making prayer; there is none for making hymns. (2) Inspiration has furnished Psalms, praises; it has not furnished prayers. They are to be made as required. (3) We have the promise of the Spirit for composing our prayers; but none for composing praises: "Likewise the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought," etc. (4) If praises and prayer are on precisely the same ground, praise must be extempore. Proper prayer is: there is no warrant for liturgical prayers. However, the hymn-singing denominations do not leave their people to extemporize praises—they give them a hymn-book; *i. e.*, they recognize the difference between prayer and praise. (5) More fundamentally, prayer and praise are two distinct things—quite as much so as preaching and praise. Yet preaching may contain some elements of prayer in it, and also of praise. (*a*) In praise there is a musical ordering of the voice; prayer is only simple articulation, or even a mental address. (*b*) Prayer is chiefly the presentation of requests, confession of sins, thanksgiving for mercies; praise is, generally, the heralding of divine excellences, of divine glory as displayed in creation, providence, and redemption. In inspired Psalmody may be found matter which might elsewhere enter into prayer; but specifically in its place in the Psalms it is psalmody; it is not prayer. It is not offered as prayer. It is offered as a tribute to God. If a given composition were mere prayer it would not be musically offered. Praise is cast into permanent forms;

it is not so with prayer; and praise is so cast in order alike to express the feelings of worship and to arouse them, and to be a coin of worship ready at hand which God will receive. The primary reference of praise is to God. The primary reference of prayer is to the wants of man. Praise is permanent because God is unchangeable, but prayer partakes of the mutable condition of men. To come close to the question as to why we may sing the praises of God in inspired prayers and not in those of uninspired men, you will note, on the one hand, that the forms of prayer in the Psalter are not really prayers. They are inspired praises in the form of prayer. On the other hand, the prayers which men propose and offer as praises are not inspired, not appointed as praises. This makes a vast difference between the prayers of the Psalter and those of the hymn-book. If, however, anyone wishes to pray to God in meter of human composition, there is no objection; however, he is not to count it praise; it will not be praise because he sings it; nor will the fact that the Psalms are sometimes in the form of prayer be an authorizing precedent. He lacks inspiration, and has no commission to provide psalmody for himself or anyone else.

*Seventh.* It is complained that the Psalms are obscure and hard to be understood. So is the arithmetic, so is the grammar; shall we, therefore, throw them out of school and substitute something that can never usefully take their place? Is religion the shallowest thing under heaven, and must it appeal chiefly to the shallows of the mind? The Romish Church puts in the same plea, and removes the whole Bible from the common people. The Psalms are not so obscure as the Book of Romans. Shall we, therefore, set it aside? There are some hard things in Peter's Epistles. Shall we, therefore, have an expurgated edition? It is thought that the Psalter is too difficult for the children. How about the whole Bible? Shall the ordinance of praise alone be whittled down to the measure of babyhood? Were the children of the early Psalm-singing Churches less Biblically and spiritually cultivated because they did not have little

soft and sappy religious songs? Is childhood to be brought into divine experiences by weak and attenuated, utterly slimy pious ditties? In point of fact, is the childhood of other Churches more spiritually vigorous than our own? What rings in your thoughts when away by yourself, and what springs to your lips when you need an apt quotation on a religious subject, so readily as these meter Psalms? And they beget in children a sense of reverence for the great God, and an impression of His gracious majesty, that a world full of children's hymn-books would fail to awaken; and there are few things so desirable as that the proper views of God be given to the youthful mind. No Book of God's Word is so easily understood and so readily leaves an impression as these Hebrew Psalms.

*Eighth.* It is urged again that Churches that have used hymns have been greatly prospered. True; and for all progress of the gospel we are thankful. However, the numerical argument is never in itself a conclusive one. If it is, the Devil has ever since the fall had the argument with him. He will not by and by. Mohammedanism has the argument now against Christianity; Roman Catholicism has it against Protestantism; Arminianism has it against Calvinism; and the former age of the Church has it against these last times as to inspired matter of praise, for the day was when almost no hymns were sung. How about superior numbers then, proving hymns were wrong? The fact is that truth may be with the minority in any case. How is it to-day in the battle on temperance? If anyone asks particularly how it comes that hymn-singing Churches have progressed more rapidly than Psalm-singing, I can only reply: (1) It by no means follows from the use of hymns. There have been, besides, the preaching of the gospel and earnest prayer and very intelligent use of many helpful agencies. (2) It is always true that God will bless men and Churches which hold error—none are perfect,—and which couple with that truth they hold wise, philosophical, and businesslike ways of work. (3) No Psalm-singing Churches within the period when the rivalry has been between

them and the Churches using hymns have permitted themselves to be perfectly intelligent in their methods of work, in their adaptation to the masses of men, or, until lately, in putting the Psalms into popular modern form. They have called themselves "witness-bearing" Churches, and they have too often borne witness in a very meager, narrow sort of way. Besides, Scriptural Psalmody has not been permitted to stand by itself on its own merits, but has always been associated with other things, against some of which the wickedness of men has rebelled, and against others the common sense of men. The Psalm-singing Churches have generally antagonized modern revivals, and spent their strength in criticising methods useful to other Churches, and have lost ground, as they ought; they have held to the offensive unwritten tenet of "occasional hearing," and have striven to enforce it; they have persisted in uselessly requiring pieces of lead and bits of pasteboard as passports to the Lord's Table; they have made "close communion" both a matter of defense and offense; they have refused choirs and have persisted in "lining out," and largely declined musical culture; they have held fast to "tables" at communion long after their usefulness has disappeared; they have refused the sound of the harp and organ; they have saddled on, in some of their denominations, specialties of ideal reform and made them terms of communion; they have carried over from the old country all sorts of quarrels that have no more business in this country than the principle of Church "establishment"; and thus in a hundred ways they have conspired to make their common denominational specialty, which is Scriptural Psalmody, unpopular. The Psalms have not, since they have had special champions here, been on trial; but the *Psalms and a multitude of other things* by which the Psalter has been hidden from view. It has been practically condemned as a book of praise because of its company. These things are mostly in the past. We have now a magnificent arrangement of the matter of praise, the crudity of the old-time poetry has been largely remedied, and the songs of God are more fully appealing

to the people of God upon their merits. The Psalter for the first time since hymns were introduced into this land is having a chance, and there are tokens of popular approbation.

*Ninth.* Some fall back on themselves in face of all argument and settle the matter by saying, "I cannot feel that it is wrong to sing hymns." This objector is a hopeless case. If a man will not use his brains in his religion, Psalm-singers cannot do much for him, nor yet consistent hymn-singers. If any man is convinced that the weight of Scriptural argument demands Scriptural Psalmody, he is not at liberty to follow his feelings. He is to follow what appears to him to be the teachings of revealed truth. He is not to be a law unto himself. The argument for the Psalms is objective—it lies outside the singers; it is not subjective—spun from their inner selves. Whenever the latter process, subjectivizing, is largely adopted, men get away from the authority of God, the dicta of revelation, and become a law unto themselves. Some men refuse God's foreknowledge of free actions because they cannot *feel* it to be possible; yet the Word of God is clear on it. Some refuse the doctrine of strict divine justice to sinners in the face of revelation because it does not consist with their ideas of God. Some determine whether certain writings are inspired by their own feelings. And so it goes. The feelings are a very variable and contradictory guide. It is the rationalizing process of the feelings which creates so many views and schisms in the Church. Loyalty to the revealed truth is demanded. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." If men sing hymns on what they believe to be Scriptural grounds, their behavior merits what it receives—candid, exegetical consideration. But if men act in anything from mere feeling, they put themselves outside the canons of Christian judgment and controversy. Mere mysticism can play no part in determining the will of God.

## OBJECTIONS TO THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF THE PSALMS IN WORSHIP

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**T**HE historic position of the Psalm-singing Churches is the center of attack on the part of our brethren who differ from us in faith and practice. They are free to admit the devotional value of the Psalter, but disputing our position touching it as the divinely authorized and exclusive manual of praise, they offer sundry objections to its use. At the outset it may be well for us to remember, and likewise remind the objector, that if it is demonstrated that the Psalms are the divinely authorized and exclusive manual of praise, all objections must be waived, for in that case the objection is against God's appointment, and not against our position. God has from the beginning claimed the right to regulate the approach of sinners to Himself, and to prescribe all the forms and ordinances of His own worship. This unquestionable divine prerogative, which has been so frequently and fearfully emphasized and vindicated, is fitted to silence forever all objections to the use of the Psalms. Should anyone be found questioning the divine sovereignty in this matter, let him hear the word—"Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" Our task is to notice some of the objections offered to the exclusive use of the Psalms in worship.

### Objection 1. Their Appointment Abrogated.

There are those who, while admitting that the Psalms were divinely appointed to be sung in praise to God, affirm that their appointment has been abrogated. At once we ask, By whom? So far as we have been able to discover, God has not given even

the slightest hint in His Word to the effect that He has, or ever will, set aside the Psalms inspired by His Spirit to make way for an uninspired hymnology. Having appointed them to be sung in His worship, He only has a right to set them aside. Evidently He has not done so, and for man to do so is to set aside His authority and "to turn worship into rebellion." So far from God having abrogated their appointment, we find that He has set his seal to their use in the New Testament Church with such commands as "Is any merry, let him sing Psalms." In Colossians iii. 16 and Eph. v. 19, whatever else may be included, it is certain that the use of the Psalms is enjoined upon those Churches. But we are confident that it can be, and has been, successfully maintained that the expression, "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs," refers to the inspired Psalter, and so its use is enjoined upon the Christian Church. So far from the divine appointment of the Psalms having been abrogated, it has thus been plainly reaffirmed in the New Testament. If it be maintained that their appointment was abrogated by limitation, we ask, Where is the limitation? There is no such limitation in the Mosaic law. The Mosaic dispensation was hoary with age before Israel's sweet singer was heard upon the slopes of Bethlehem, and the Psalter was not complete until perhaps a thousand years after Moses. There is certainly no limitation in the subject matter of the songs themselves, as anyone must know who is at all familiar with the contents of the Psalter. That they have not been set aside by any substitute of God's appointment is evident from the fact that there is no Psalter in the New Testament, nor was anyone commissioned by God to act as "the sweet singer" of the Christian Church.

#### Objection 2. Hymns Not Forbidden.

Another objection offered to the exclusive use of the Psalms is that hymns are not forbidden, and therefore may be used in the praise service of the Church. This objection has to do with the Scriptural law of worship. Briefly, that law is, "that divine warrant is necessary for every element of doctrine, government, and

worship in the Church; that is, whatever in these spheres is not commanded in the Scriptures, either expressly or by good and necessary consequences from their statements, is forbidden. The statement in the Larger Catechism, Question 109, is "The sins forbidden in the Second Commandment are all devising, counseling, commanding, or in anywise approving any religious worship not instituted by God alone." The Confession of Faith, Chapter xxi., Section 1, sets forth the law as follows: "The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will that He may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representations, or in any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures." In Deuteronomy iv. 2 there is the positive declaration, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I commanded you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it," and in Deuteronomy xii. 32, "What things soever I command you, observe to do it; thou shalt not add thereto nor diminish from it." These and like Scriptures emphasize the fact that the question is not "What is forbidden," but "What is commanded," for the Lord's commandment is both inclusive and exclusive—"Ye shall not add thereto nor diminish therefrom." "The law is not that we are at liberty to act when God has not spoken, but just the contrary; we have no right to act when He is silent. It will not answer to say in justification of some element of worship that God has not expressly prohibited it; we must produce a divine warrant for it. The absence of such a warrant is an interdiction. We cannot without guilt transcend divine appointment. No discretion is allowed the Church to introduce into her worship what God has not instituted and appointed." The question is not then, "Has the use of hymns been forbidden," but "Has their use in the worship of God been commanded?" What God has commanded is to be our guiding principle, and it is well for us that we have such a chart to steer by in this matter, for, as Calvin observes, "When we are left at liberty, all we are able to do is to go astray." For illustration of the truth of this state-

ment of Calvin, and of the peril involved in the reasoning found in this objection, we have but to note the corrupt worship of the Church of Rome. Abandon the principle that God alone has a right to prescribe His worship, and the door is open wide for the incoming of all manner of human devices in the worship of the Church of God.

### Objection 3. Psalms Not Definitely Christian.

It is further objected that the Psalms are not suitable or sufficient for New Testament worshipers, that they are too obscure and hard to be understood, that they are not definitely Christian, and therefore that there is need of a Christian supplement. The objectors as a rule are not consistent, for surely if the Psalms are not suitable to be *sung* by New Testament saints, they are not suitable to be *read*. But anyone who has attended the services of hymn-singing congregations cannot fail to have noticed that in public worship the Psalms are read almost universally. Evidently the reason for this is their suitability to arouse the devotional spirit in the worshipers. It is further evident that this objection arises from a misconception of the meaning and purpose of praise. The main object of praise is to declare and magnify the excellences of the divine character, as well as to give expression to every variety of devotional feeling which the contemplation of these perfections is designed to quicken and call forth. Our God is the unchanging Jehovah, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. This fact alone is sufficient to prove that the Psalms which were suitable for the celebration of His praises in the days of David, Isaiah, Christ, and His Apostles are still suitable channels through which His people may voice their grateful praise. To admit their divine inspiration is to admit that "the Spirit of God could in the days of David prepare songs better suited to New Testament times than it is possible for uninspired men to prepare now." Had the Lord Jesus not counted the Psalms suitable for use in the praise service of His Church through all ages it is hardly conceivable that in the supreme hour of His life He should have sung a Psalm with His disciples and

upon the cross used the language of a Psalm in uttering the cry of His broken heart, and again in committing Himself to God. As Lightfoot says, "He Who could have inspired every disciple to be a David sings the Psalms of David," and by the Spirit He gave commandment to His Church to sing them. As to their sufficiency for New Testament worshipers, I cannot do better than quote these words from Dr. Davidson: "There is no case in which the saint will ever find himself in which he cannot find a Psalm suited to his condition and calculated to minister to his edification and comfort. Is the believer's heart broken under a sense of sin and unworthiness? Let him sing such a Psalm as the Fifty-First. Does a sense of the power of indwelling sin oppress him? Such Psalms as the Sixth or Thirty-Eighth will utter his laboring spirit aright to God. Has he a peculiar tenderness and condition? The plaintive accents of the Twenty-Fifth, and others like it, will be an unction of sweetness upon his palpitating heart. Do the great Redeemer's sufferings and humiliation and love engage his devotional thought? Such Psalms as the Twentieth, Twenty-Second, and Fortieth will guide and elevate, console and sanctify him. Is he under the hidings of God's countenance? The pent-up feelings of his soul will find utterance through such a channel as is opened up to him in the Forty-Second and Forty-Third hymns of Israel's sweet singer. Is he a stranger in a strange land, and deprived, for a season, of that most precious of all earth's privileges, the sanctuary of God and the sweet society of saints? The vehement forth-goings of a yearning spirit that refuses to be comforted will turn to the Twenty-Seventh, or Eighty-Fourth, or to some other suitable spiritual song in the collection. Is sickness upon him and death imminent? God has given Psalms like the Thirty-Ninth, Thirty-Second, and Ninetieth. Are enemies and oppositions and difficulties around him? He cannot miss a song to suit his case; the Thirty-Fourth and Ninety-First and the One Hundred and Twenty-First will fill his soul with a restful peace. Does providence prosper him? Does heaven smile on his person

and on his home? God has tuned his voice to thanksgiving in such a hymn as the Sixty-Fifth of the Psalter. Is his faith clear and calm whilst dangers and sufferings pour the very shadows of death thick and dark around him? A hundred Psalms at once, led by the Twenty-Third, with a hundred tongues utter forth his sublime composure and heroic faith. Does palefaced pestilence stalk abroad? The Ninety-First Psalm will tell of the quiet of the good man's soul. Are the judgments of God imminent over a guilty world? Then will the good man, strong in the power and love of his God, adopt the language of Luther, and say to the trembling ones around him, 'Come, let us sing the Forty-Sixth Psalm.' The Psalter of God insufficient, unsuited to the New Testament worshiper! No one who is acquainted with its vast treasures of praise will so assert. Millions can testify to its sufficiency.

Touching the charge that they are obscure and hard to understand, we may say that they are no more difficult to understand when sung than when read, and our objectors hardly refuse to read these devotional lyrics. They are no more obscure than many parts of the New Testament, notably Romans and the Revelation. Multitudes of devoted saints find them easy of understanding and feed their souls to fatness upon their blessed truths. Dr. Horsley has truly said, "Of all the Books of the Old Testament, the Book of Psalms is the most universally read; but I fear as little as any understood. This cannot be ascribed to any extraordinary obscurity of these sacred songs, for of all the prophetic parts of the Scriptures they are certainly the most perspicuous." It was but a just encomium of the Psalter that came from the pen of one of the early Fathers, that "it is a complete system of divinity for the use and edification of the common people of the Christian Church."

The objection that the Psalms are not definitely Christian amounts to a denial of the presence of Christ in them. But he who offers such an objection must be pitifully ignorant of the Psalter. Jesus Christ in His person and work, in His divine dig-

nity and humiliation, sufferings and death, resurrection and ascension into heaven, is the great subject of the Psalms, and was evidently so understood to be by the early Christians. Bishop Alexander, in his "Witness of the Psalms to Christ," tells us, as a result of a careful examination, that reference is made to the Book of Psalms, either by quotation or otherwise, in no fewer than 286 passages in the New Testament. It is inconceivable that the Spirit would have made such use of the Psalms in the New Testament if they are not definitely Christian, and it is a noteworthy fact that the life of the Early Church seemed to be steeped in the Psalms.

But it is especially objected that the name of Jesus is lacking. The name of God does not appear in the Book of Esther, but he is blind who cannot see the hand of God in that book of providence. Jesus is in the Psalms, though He is not yet called by that name. He is there as Saviour, set forth fully in His three-fold office of prophet, priest, and king. He is there as shepherd, feeding, leading, and protecting His people. Says one, "I am persuaded that the Psalms are nothing else so much as they are just the outpourings of the soul of the man Christ Jesus; all the humiliations, trials, persecutions, sorrows, and agonies of His life are uttered here; all the praise and joys and triumphs of His redemptive work are here given a voice and words." "There is not," says Bishop Horsley, "a page in this Book of Psalms in which the pious reader will not find his Saviour, if he reads with a view of finding Him." "We are in these Psalms," says another, "brought, as it were, into His closet, are made the witnesses of His secret devotions, and are enabled to see even the inward workings of His heart." An eminent writer (Dr. Alexander) has said, "The golden key of the Psalter lies in a pierced hand."

It is further objected in this connection that the Psalms speak only of a Saviour to come, and so we need songs that present a clearer and fuller revelation of Christ. The one offering this objection betrays his ignorance of the contents of the Psalter.

The fact is that the Psalms never speak of the Saviour as yet to come in the flesh; and this very fact furnishes strong presumptive evidence that the Psalms were designed for the Christian dispensation. An examination of Psalms ii., xvi., xviii., xx., xxi., xl., xxiv., xlvii., lxxii., cxxxii., etc., will suffice to substantiate the statement that, save where His Second Coming is referred to, the future tense is never used of our Lord in the Psalms. Evidently the objector has failed to note that this objection militates against his own position, for if, as assumed, Psalms which present a Saviour yet to come are not suited to New Testament times, it follows that a large number of the Psalms are better adapted to the worship of the Church now than then, since in them the Saviour is represented as having already come, as having suffered, died, risen, and ascended on high. And as for songs that present a fuller revelation of Christ, what fuller revelation do we need than that given by the Spirit of God in the Psalms. "In these Psalms," says Jonathan Edwards, "David speaks of the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension into heaven, satisfaction, and intercession of Christ; 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 final judgment."

But it is further objected that the Psalms are essentially Jewish, clouded and encumbered with Jewish imagery. In general we may say that the objection might be urged with equal force against much of the New Testament, notably the Epistle to the Hebrews, parts of Ephesians, Romans, and the Revelation. We freely admit that there is figurative language in the Psalms, but this offers no difficulty to the Christian who is conversant with the Word of God. Says one, "The whole Jewish economy spake of Christ; and the prophets, priests, and kings of Israel were not merely types of the Perfect One, but they were for the time that then was the visible human mediators of the revelation of salvation, and in and through them the One Mediator, the Son of

God, was working and teaching His Church." Through some of this imagery there have been opened to us the inmost thoughts, sorrows, sufferings, and conflicts of our Lord. "If you take away such figures as Israel, temple, priest, altar, sacrifice, house of God, etc., you destroy the very means by which God has been pleased to convey to men a knowledge of His salvation." But if consistent, the objector must discard many of his hymns as well as the Psalms, for he will find in them these same Jewish ideas, as for example, "Thou very paschal lamb," "The priesthood still remains the same," "Let us an altar raise," "Ye chosen seed of Israel's race," "Hallelujah to the Lamb."

#### Objection 4. The Psalms Savor of Vengeance.

Another objection is to the effect that the Bible Psalmody savors so much of law and vengeance that it is not so well adapted for the devotions of the believer as the hymnody of the Christian poet filled with the love of Jesus. We would remind the objector that the contents of the Psalter have distinct appointment in New Testament times as the Christian's hymn-book. Is it probable that the Lord Jesus would enjoin upon His Church the singing of songs which breathe a vindictive spirit? To allege that any of the Psalms breathe such a spirit is to bring a grave accusation against their Author, the Holy Spirit. "Did He move any of the Psalm-writers to express malicious feelings, and that under the guise of inspiration? He is certainly a very daring man who will bring such an accusation against the Spirit of God." Yet this has been done by Dr. Watts and others. Speaking of the Psalms, Dr. Watts says, "Some of them are almost opposite the spirit of the gospel. There are a thousand lines in the Book of Psalms which were not made for a Church in our days to assume as its own. I should rejoice to see David converted into a Christian. There are many hundred verses in the Book of Psalms which a Christian cannot properly assume in singing,—as Psalms lxviii., xiii., xvi., xxxvi.; and Psalms lxix. and cix. are so full of cursings that they hardly become a follower of the blessed Jesus." We have only to say to this that if the in-

spiration of these Psalms is admitted, then such language is nothing short of blasphemous. But it is a grievous mistake to suppose that these Psalms were dictated by a spirit of private animosity and revenge. No one can read the life story of David and note his magnanimous treatment of his arch-enemy, Saul, and yet suppose that he cherished sentiments of personal hatred and revenge. In most, if not all, of these Psalms, Christ is impersonated, as can be proved by quotations in the New Testament and by internal evidence. Christ Himself used the Sixty-Ninth and One Hundred and Ninth Psalms. "They are His very words, spoken by His Spirit, ages before His incarnation, concerning His betrayer and concerning His malicious and implacable foes." It is altogether remarkable, the use and the application of these songs in the New Testament. Compare Psalm lxix. 9 with John ii. 17, and Rom. xv. 3; verse 21 with Matt. xxvii. 34, 48; verses 22, 23, with Rom. xi. 9, 10; verse 25 with Acts i. 20; also Psalm cix. 3 with John xv. 25; verse 8 with Acts i. 16, 20. From these, and other comparisons that might be made, it is manifest that these Psalms are the language of the Holy Spirit, declaring beforehand the cruelty and malice of Christ's malignant enemies, and Christ's petitions and judgments against them. In singing these songs we purpose to praise the awful justice and righteous judgments of our divine Redeemer. Says Dr. James Harper, "There is a sickly sentimentalism which seeks the love of God above His justice, whereas justice is an exalted product of the highest love. In the Psalms there is a roundness of truth, and the Psalter would be incomplete if these Psalms to which such violent objection is taken were lacking." Says a writer in *The Methodist*, "One of the curiosities of skepticism is the assault that has been made upon the 'Imprecatory Psalms.' It was perhaps to be expected that an age which ran to sentimentalism, and ignored righteousness, should find little comfort in these Psalms. The Psalms are pitched everywhere on the key of Bible morality; they express the emotions of a soul in sympathy with the law of a righteous and holy God." The code of morals of the Old Testament was essen-

tially the same as of the New. The Ten Commandments were binding then as now. The indulgence of malicious feelings was condemned then as now. It will not be amiss to note that these Psalms to which objection is made are paralleled in the New Testament. Where in the compass of literature will you find such words as in Matthew xxiii. 33, "Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell?" Other Scriptures of like character are 1 Cor. xvi. 22; 2 Thess. i. 6-9; 2 Tim. iv. 14; Heb. x. 38; Rev. vi. 9, 10; xi. 16-18; xviii. 6. In the Psalms God is sovereign, righteous, terrible to the evil, but kind and gracious to the good. He is longsuffering to us in our errors, patient with us in our doubts. He lifts us up out of the pit of sin; He forgives our iniquities. Is the loving God made more loving in any hymn, song, or creed? Who as the Psalmist has so laid bare the tender, pitying heart of God? If we love righteousness and hate iniquity, if we are at heart loyal to God and the truth, we shall find only comforts, warnings, and very tender expostulations in the Psalms. But if God is righteous, if His moral law is as sure as gravitation, what can we expect from the inspired singer but sympathy with the divine indignation against the incorrigibly wicked? "As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when Thou awakest, Thou shalt despise their image."

#### Objection 5. Singing the Gospel Edifying.

It is claimed that singing the gospel is an edifying exercise; hence it should be allowed in praise; and so an exclusive Psalmody is an abridgment of Christian liberty. We have no disposition to deny that singing the gospel may be a useful exercise, stirring the emotions and so opening the heart to the truth and to Him Who is the truth. But singing the gospel to men and singing praise to God are two different things. Because singing the gospel may be edifying to men is no reason why we should set aside the Psalms which God has appointed for the celebration of His own praise. This is one of the very serious objections to the use of human composition in the praise service of the Church; singing the gospel to men takes the place of singing

praise to God. Thus we rob God of His due, and granting all the good results claimed for singing the gospel, we are guilty of that which has been condemned, viz., "doing evil that good may come." Singing the gospel to men is not praise to God, and no Christian is at liberty to interfere with God's appointment for His own praise. No Christian is at liberty to form his doctrinal belief, rules of life, and religious observances irrespective of the word and authority of Christ. Says Dr. Hodge, "Christian liberty is not an absolute liberty to do as we please, but a regulated liberty to obey God."

But it is asked, if human composition in praise to God is offensive to Him, how can we account for the fact that He uses such songs as a channel of the Spirit's influence in conversion and edification; and for the fact that the hymn-singing Churches are the largest and most numerous? Doubtless men have been converted under the singing of the gospel, but we are to remember that the singing accompanies the preaching of the Word, and so "the most that can be said is that singing the gospel is an adjunct to the preaching of it." Praise is due unto the Lord. By the use of that which He has not appointed for His praise He is robbed of that which is His due, and yet He has graciously condescended to use His own truth presented in the songs for the conversion of men, even when it takes the place of praise due to Him. When Israel was famishing for water God spake to Moses, saying, "Speak ye unto the rock before their eyes." But instead of speaking to the rock Moses spake to the rebels, and smote the rock. He "did not sanctify God in the eyes of the children of Israel," but still "the water came forth abundantly and the congregation drank and their cattle." The fact of the water coming forth and the people drinking to the full was no evidence that God was pleased with what Moses did. We know that He was displeased with His servant, though for the sake of the famishing people He gave drink to the thirsty.

As to the hymn-singing Churches being the largest and most numerous, I suppose that even our objectors are hardly prepared

to assert that the argument from numbers is conclusive. The Word of God, and not the sentiment of the multitude, must be our rule in faith and practice. That God does bless the efforts of hymn-singing Churches we gladly admit, and in their prosperity we rejoice. But we are not prepared to admit that their blessing results from their use of hymns instead of Psalms in the service of praise. This sort of reasoning would soon involve the objector in grave difficulties. Majorities have not always—aye, more, they have not usually—been right in matters of faith and doctrine. In the time of Ahab it was Elijah and seven thousand faithful ones against the multitudes of Israel. To-day Mohammedanism far outnumbers Christianity. Roman Catholicism is right if we are to follow the multitude. Arminians outnumber Calvinists. If relative growth determines the question of right practice, then the last few years have demonstrated through one denomination that immersion is the proper mode of baptism. Further, during the last few years few Christian communities have had such growth as Christian Science, while Mormonism and Spiritualism can claim much divine favor. The fact is that numbers prove nothing in this matter. But we may remind our objector that his argument might once have been used more effectively against his own position, for the time was when the whole Church of Christ used nothing but an inspired Psalmody. A hymn-singer would have been a lonely individual in the Church at the close of the second century and later. And to-day Psalm-singers are not a feeble folk, nor are they lonesome among the hosts of God. A brother-minister, who made a careful investigation about five years ago, gave it as his conviction that not less than five hundred thousand Christians sing the Lord's songs to the exclusion of all human composition. If Psalm-singing Churches have fallen behind in numbers and growth, there must be other causes than the fact of their having continued true to God's appointment of the Psalms as the subject matter of their praise. Their growth has been hindered, not because they have sung Psalms, but possibly by the way they have sung them.

The United Presbyterian Church to-day is struggling for an existence in one of our great cities where seventy-five years ago the opportunity was open for it to become one of the leading denominations, and for that city to become a great center for our denominational life. The opportunity was not improved, and hundreds of people, once United Presbyterians, are now in other denominations in that city. The reason was not that we sang Psalms, but that we refused to adopt such methods of Church work as would result in men being won to Christ, that we exalted non-essentials to a place quite out of keeping with their real worth, that we opposed revivals and revival methods, that we failed to recognize that we had a mission to others as well as to those who came to our shores from Scotland and the north of Ireland, and that we failed to practice Paul's method in soul-winning, "I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some." These same hindrances obtained largely among Psalm-singing Churches everywhere, retarding their growth and interfering with their usefulness. But the situation is now changed, and the Psalm-singing Churches are making such progress that soon the "reproach of famine will be no more upon them." During seventeen years of pastoral work in village, town, and city, and no little evangelistic work in various places, I have yet to find one who declined to become a member of the United Presbyterian Church because of its exclusive use of the Psalms in worship. With our splendid versification of the Psalms set to music of a high order, our praise service compares favorably with that of other Churches in manner, and as far outranks them in matter as the songs of God outrank the effusions of uninspired men.

#### Objection 6. Prayer and Praise.

A further objection to our position is that we are allowed to compose our own prayers, and therefore may compose our own hymns of praise. It may be remarked at the outset that not one Christian in ten thousand does compose his own hymns, and not one confines himself in song to his own compositions. Of course

the meaning of this objection is that we compose our own prayers, and therefore others may compose our hymns for us—an absurd sort of a proposition, since there is no logical connection between the premises and the conclusion. The logic of the objection would make everyone who prays a poet—"we compose our own prayers, and therefore may compose our own hymns." But this objection does not recognize the fundamental difference between prayer and praise. They agree in that they both have to do with worship, but they differ in that in prayer we voice our needs to God, while in praise we ascribe to Him the glory which is His due. Our changing circumstances vary our needs and hence our prayers, but God is the same and His praise is unchanging. No matter what our condition or need may be, God is yet to be praised for what He is in Himself and for His marvelous and gracious works. Again, God has provided in His Word a book of praises for us to use in our approach to Him, but He has given us no collection of prayers and commanded us to use these in presenting our desires to Him. He has promised us His Spirit to help us pray, but He has not promised us the spirit of psalmody. In the catalogue of His spiritual gifts found in the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians, all of which have to do with the edification of the Church, there is no mention made of the gift of song. The only reasonable inference is that a manual of praise had already been provided for the Christian Church, suitable and sufficient. The disciples asked the Master to teach them to pray, but they did not seek from Him the gift of song, nor did He give them a model New Testament hymn, saying, "After this manner sing ye." From such considerations as these we conclude "that the fact that we are allowed to compose our own prayers, enlightened by the Spirit of God, does not warrant us in composing our own songs in praise to God, even if every individual were gifted with poetic talent, which is not the case."

Objection 7. Good Men Write and Sing Hymns.

Again it is said that good men and women have written unin-

spired songs of praise, and that these are used and enjoyed by most saintly people. We do not deny the fact, but we do deny the deduction. Thousands of good men were slaveholders in the South half a century ago, but no one would now think of claiming that because of this fact slavery was right. The example, faith, and practice of good men are not, and never were, an infallibly safe rule of faith and duty. "To the law and to the testimony." Multitudes of good men have held to erroneous doctrines, and have indulged in practices for which they have had no "Thus saith the Lord." There are many good men and women who will neither compose nor sing a hymn in praise to God. Their example is as valuable as the example of those who think and act differently. But we must have a surer guide than the example of good men in matters of worship. There are good men to-day in the Roman Catholic Church, but this is no argument in favor of their false worship. Despite all the mummery and Mariolatry of the Romish Church, these pious souls have found and fed upon the bread of life. So, doubtless, good men have composed, and saintly souls have sung and have been edified by, uninspired songs, but it has been because God has been pleased to use the truth contained in them, even when the songs themselves have been used in a way that He did not approve.

#### Objection 8. The Feelings of the Singer.

But someone says, "No matter what is said and no matter what seems to be proven, I cannot feel that it is wrong to sing hymns." Jesus told His disciples that there would be those who would seek to put them to death and in so doing would think that they were doing God's service. Saul was the arch-persecutor of the Christian Church, but he was doing all he did in good conscience, and, so far from feeling that he was doing wrong, he was persuaded that his zeal for the law of God and the worship of his fathers was eminently right. No man's feelings can safely be depended upon to guide him aright in matters of faith and practice. If being able to say, "Somehow I cannot feel that it is wrong to do this," makes the action right, then one whose con-

science has not been enlightened by the Word and Spirit of God may justify himself in almost any act. Thousands of Christians indulge in certain amusements, enter into certain social, financial, or political affiliations which according to the teaching of God's Word are unbecoming a child of God, and contrary to God's will, but they justify themselves by saying, "I do not feel that it is wrong for me." It must be evident to every thoughtful person that the path of life and duty must be determined by the revealed will of God, and not by the changing emotions of men. So also in matters of worship. It is not our feelings that are to control our actions, but God's appointment. Many reject the doctrines of election and foreordination for no other reason than that "somehow they cannot feel that this is right." Many deny that the heathen are perishing without the gospel, simply because the fact does not correspond with their feelings.

There are other minor objections offered to our position and practice touching the exclusive use of the Psalms as our manual of praise, but the ones noticed practically cover the field. Regarding them all, we have to say in a word what was said at the outset, viz., that God's appointment is of far more concern to us than man's opinion. In our praise service our great desire is to show ourselves approved unto God. We stand upon the impregnable rock of God's revealed will.