

72
The Propriety of finging the Pſalms of
David in New Teſtament Worſhip.

Will: A. Mitchell - 1776

S E R M O N

PREACHED

At MIDDLE-OCTORARO,

APRIL 13th, 1774.

At the Opening of the ASSOCIATE PRESBYTERY
of PENNSYLVANIA.

By WILLIAM MARSHALL,
Minifter of the Goſpel to the Scots Preſbyterian Church
in PHILADELPHIA.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 16.

“ All Scripture is given by Inſpiration of God, and is
profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction,
for Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs.”

P E R T H :

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THE subject of the ensuing Sermon, was assigned by the Associate Presbytery; agreeable to their plan of appointing members to preach by turns, on such subjects as are deemed necessary to throw light on 'the present truth.'

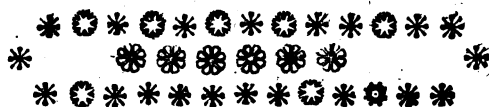
THEY must be strangers indeed in our Israel, who know not that singing the Psalms of David in Christian worship, is not only now disputed, but warmly opposed by many in the British Dominions.

This Sermon makes its appearance in the world, at the desire of the members of the said Presbytery, and of some other persons whom the Author is bound to regard.

The peculiar nature of the subject, will sufficiently appologize for the uncommon number of quotations, and notes.

If the glory of Immanuel and the interests of His Cause, are hereby, in any degree promoted, all is gained, that is wished for, by the **AUTHOR**.

1607/3010



COLOS. iii, 16.

“ 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.”

My Brethren,

YOU need not be informed that this Reverend Presbytery have appointed me to exhibit on this occasion, the propriety of singing the Psalms of David in Christian worship. A subject truly interesting, and far surpassing our abilities to manage properly. Conscious of this, we venture on it with a trembling heart, but desiring to look to the LORD, that he may send forth ‘ the Spirit of truth, to guide ‘ us into all truth.’

The grand scope of the Apostle Paul, in this letter to the church of Colosse, is to alarm her, of the danger she was in from the Jewish zealots, (who pressed the necessity of her observing the ceremonial law,) and to prevent her being tainted, with a mixture of Gentile philosophy. Tho’ Paul had not the honour of planting this church, (this being conferred on Epaphras) yet he shews his concern about her, by addressing her in this epistle; for, ‘ he had daily the care of all the churches upon him.’ He is now a prisoner at Rome, but for-

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gets

gets not the churches of God: He not only prays for them, but sends unto them letters. What some observe of the Psalms of David, that such of them as were wrote in the wilderness, have a peculiar sweetness in them; may be applied to Paul's epistles, that such of them as he wrote in prison, are the most remarkable.

In this epistle we have the preface and the body of it. The preface lies from the beginning to the twelfth verse of the first chapter; then follows the body or substance of it, which is both doctrinal and practical.--- We have sundry practical directions, given us in the preceding context. We are exhorted to heavenly-mindedness, in verses 1,---5. to mortification of sin in the various instances of it, verses 5,-- 12. to brotherly love, verse 15. to be subject to the peace of God, verse 15. and in our text to a wise improvement of the word of Christ. '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.'

D In the following discourse on which words, thro' divine aid, I shall,

I. Briefly show 'how the word of Christ SHOULD dwell in us richly in all wisdom.'

II. I shall explain the way we are to 'evidence this, (to wit) by teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.'

III. Illustrate the manner of performing this, by 'singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord.'

IV. I shall make some 'practical improvement' of the whole.

I. I shall briefly show 'how the word of Christ' SHOULD dwell in us richly in all wisdom.' Here I shall offer the following observations:

First,

First, That the 'word of Christ' means the whole of divine revelation. This is called the 'word of Christ,' because it was either spoken by himself immediately in his own person, or mediately in the ministry of the prophets and apostles, 'The prophesy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,' 2 Pet. i. 21. The Old and New Testaments are called the word of Christ, because he is the subject-matter of them; all the lines of divine revelation centre in him, as the rays in the sun. 'Search the scriptures for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me,' John v. 39. 'To him gave all the prophets witness, &c.' Acts x. 43. It is in the scripture Christ continues to speak to the church, and hence 'his name is called, The word of God,' Rev. xix. 13.

Secondly, That 'the word of Christ' should be our 'daily study;' for it should dwell in us. The Greek word here, rendered dwell, signifies to 'keep house.' This shows that the word of Christ should not be like a 'stranger, or a way-faring man, that taketh up his abode for a night,' but it should be a residing guest with us; we ought to be well acquainted with it, as we are with those of our own families. But, alas! although 'God has written to us the great things of his law, yet they are counted as strange things,' Hos. viii. 12. The sacred oracles should not dwell with us as servants do, whom we order to obey us; this is the entertainment they receive from those who force interpretations on them to support their erroneous opinions and detestable practices, and thus 'wrest the scriptures to their own destruction;' but they should dwell with us as a master in his house, and we as servants, are from them to take direction with respect to the whole of our duty. 'The word is a lamp unto my feet, and

'a light unto my path,' Ps. cxix. 105. Many have the word of Christ 'dwelling with,' but not 'in them; this is the case with those who have Bibles in their houses, but do not read and study them. Let us hear with solemnity, the divine charge given us concerning the word of Christ; 'And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up,' Deut. vii 7, 8.

Thirdly, The 'word of Christ' should be 'highly esteemed' by us. It should dwell in us richly by informing our judgments, transforming our hearts and reforming our lives. All now have easy access to it, by the translation of the Bible out of the original tongues: Our Father's will is made known to us in our mother-tongue. The 'word of Christ is a tree of knowledge,' and thanks be to God that it is not forbidden: Yea, it is a 'tree of life,' which we may eat the fruit of, and live for ever. Here is no 'flaming sword to guard the way of it,' but there is one to pierce thro' those who despise it. We should not only look into our Bibles in the house of God, but we ought to read them in our families, and closets: If we expect to reach the heaven of glory, we should daily steer by this compass, for we are in danger of being swallowed up in the quick sands of carnal delights, or suffering shipwrecks on the keelpointed rocks of worldly disappointments.

Fourthly, That we should 'apply the word of Christ' to ourselves. It should dwell in us not only richly but in all wisdom. Many have the word of Christ dwelling in them only in speculation; they read it merely to furnish themselves with matter for conversation, but are quite strangers to that divine wisdom which teacheth
to

to apply what is therein written. But we should consider, in the most serious manner, that God speaks to us in his word. The promises are breasts of consolation which we ought daily to suck; the precepts are a rule which we ought constantly to observe; and the threatenings should alarm us when we fall into sin. The greater part of mankind conduct themselves as if they were not addressed by God's word; they are elevated with the promises, and terrified with the threatenings of those of their fellow mortals, who are in exalted stations of life; but the promises and threatenings of the Lord God do not affect them, because they do not apply them. Therefore, they say unto God, Depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what profit should we have if we pray unto him, Job xxi. 14, 15. Where Christ's word dwells richly in all wisdom, it will be found to be a guest that will pay well for its lodging; where it is applied by faith, it will produce the most salutary effects, grace will flourish, and others be refreshed with its fragrance; for it will excite us to teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs. This brings me to the

II Head, which was to explain the way that we are to evidence the word of Christ dwelling richly in us in all wisdom, viz. by teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

We come now to tread on disputed ground, yet we need not fear to venture on it while we have scripture, and the suffrages of eminent divines to direct our path. But before we come to speak particularly on this head, it will be necessary to explain the terms, PSALMS, HYMNS, and SPIRITUAL SONGS. And for this end, let us produce the sense in which these terms are understood

derstood by different interpreters, (whose authority will have considerable weight with some) by which it may appear, that our view of them is not singular, and if we have departed from their genuine meaning, it is not in despicable company.

Hierom thus explains the words, "Psalms may be-
 "long to moral things, which we ought to practise,"
 as Psalm. xxxvii. &c. "Hymns may belong to sacred
 "things, what we ought to meditate on, and contem-
 "plate, as the power, wisdom, goodness, and majesty
 "of God. (As Psalms cxxxv and cxxxvi. &c.) Spiritu-
 "al Songs may belong to natural things, what we
 "ought to debate and discuss, to wit, the rise, order,
 "harmony, and continuance of the world and God's
 "infinite wisdom manifested in it," as Psalm. civ.

Some divines are of the opinion that our Apostle useth the words 'psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs,' to answer the Hebrew distinction of psalms, which is as follows: 1. Some psalms were called **MIZMORIM**, which treated of various and different subjects. 2. Others were denominated **TEHILLIM**, which only mentioned the praises of the Most High. 3. The Jews called other psalms **SHIRIM**, which were songs more artificially composed, and, some observe, were sung with the help of a musical instrument*.

Dr Edwards gives the following explication of the words, "**PSALMS** is a general term of great latitude, and is a word in common for all those songs which contain in them the praise of God, and set forth in general his sacred attributes or perfections, and in any way express devotion, or contribute to piety and holiness: Such were the psalms of David wherein
 "God

* See Mr Well's sermon on Eph. v 19. in the supplement to the morning exercise, page 124.

" God is extolled and magnified, and where likewise
 " there are penitential confessions, supplications, and
 " commemorations of divine mercies, and pathetic and
 " devout prayers, and exhortations to a holy life. Af-
 " ter psalms the apostle adds Hymns, as a more com-
 " pleat thing (saith Theophylact, one of the fathers,)
 " because they are of a more singular and peculiar
 " strain, and God is praised from the consideration
 " of his greatness and majesty, his power and glory.
 " Spiritual Songs, or Odes, seem to exceed the two
 " former, not only because they are done with more
 " art, and consist of due measures, but because the pe-
 " culiar subject of them is the goodness and benignity
 " of God: Or more exactly thus, The others set forth
 " the divine excellencies and perfections considered in
 " themselves, and in their nature, but the latter are a
 " displaying of his excellencies as they respect us, and
 " as we have a particular share in them. And these
 " compositions are styled Spiritual, because they are
 " not only indited by the help of the Holy Spirit, but
 " they flow from a spiritual and heavenly frame of mind
 " and are sung with great emotion of spirit*,"

That eminent reformer John Calvio, whose memory
 and judgment we ought to revere, gives us his opinion
 in words to this effect: " Psalms are that in the sing-
 " ing of which a musical instrument besides the tongue
 " was used. Hymns, are songs of praise, whether sung
 " with a high voice, or otherwise. Spiritual songs, are
 " such psalms as not only contain praises, but exhor-
 " tations, and other arguments †."

These interpreters did not understand by hymns and
 spiritual songs, as if the apostle intended human com-
 posures;

* Dr Edward's theologia reformatæ, vol I. 665.

† Calvin's Latin commentary on the epistles, p. 708.

posures; neither do they charge him with a needless tautology, as our late refiners do, though no more than the psalms of David be here meant. But even let us suppose, (but not grant) that the book of psalms could not be distinguished into these classes, yet this would not be sufficient to prove human composures are here intended; in regard it is no uncommon thing for the Spirit of God to use three words in one verse expressing the same thing: As when Paul says, 'Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I.' 2 Cor, xi, 22.

We readily grant that there is some difficulty in explaining the distinction of 'psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs'†; yet we presume, a careful perusal of the sacred Volume, and observing the sense in which the Spirit of God, uses these terms, in other parts of it, will greatly tend to throw light on this subject; for it is a received maxim among the orthodox, 'That Scripture is the best interpreter of scripture.'

Let us then proceed to enquire at the 'Law and the Testimony' how these terms are used and applied,---Psalms, in the common acceptation of the word, in scripture, mean compositions on spiritual subjects, chiefly penned by David, 'that sweet singer in Israel;' hence a great number of them bear this title, "A psalm of David." Hymns are applied to part of the psalms; such as these which celebrate the perfections of God, or such as were picked out for special occasions, as the HALLEL, 'those degrees,' and for every day. Thus word is used in the history of Christ's celebrating the last passover with his disciples, 'And when they had sung
'an

† Qui differant hymni a psalmis, & quid rursum psalmi a canticis difficile est certa definitione tradere. Calvin.

* an Hymn, they went out unto the mount of Olives *.
 How strong is the reasonings and pious the reflections
 of that learned antiquarian, Dr Lightfoot on this pas-
 sage! We cannot pass over this, without delivering his
 sentiments in his own words, as they are so very apposite.
 " What hymn did Christ and his apostles sing? The
 " very same that every company did, viz. the great
 " HALLEL, as it was called, which began at the cxiii
 " psalm, and ended at the cxviii.---- No expositor but
 " grants this, and no reason to the contrary; for Christ
 " complied with all the rites of the passover, and start-
 " ed not aside from them in this. Here the Lord of
 " David sings the psalms of David. What Christ saith
 " by way of posing, ' If David in the Spirit call him
 " Lord, how is he his son ?' We may say the like by
 " way of admiration, If David in the spirit call him Lord
 " how did he descend to make use of his poetry? What
 " says our caviller now? Set forms are too strait for the
 " Spirit. He that had the spirit above measure, thinks
 " not so, but useth such. He that gave the Spirit to
 " compose, sings what he composed. That all-blessed
 " copy of peace and order, would have indited himself,
 " could have inspired every disciple to have been a Da-
 " vid, but submits to order which God had appointed,
 " sings the psalms of David, and tenders the peace of
 " the church, and takes the same course the whole
 " church did †."---By ' spiritual songs' some understand
 other parts of scripture, called songs, besides David's
 psalms, such as the song of Moses, Exod. xv. and Deut.

xxxii.

* Mat. xxvi. 30. This hymn is thought to be the lat-
 ter part of the great Hallelujah consisting of the cxliith,
 and the five following psalms; and was usually sung,
 partly before, and partly after the paschal supper,

Wait's gospel history, page 452.

† Lightfoot's works, vol. II. 1160.

xxxii. of Deborah and Barak, Judges v. of Solomon, of Zecharias, Luke i. 67. and the Lamentations of Jeremiah. But in regard these are not insertd in the book of Psalms, nor do we find that they were sung in the Jewish church, and in regard the psalms of David contain such a sweet variety suitable to every case, and in the New Testament are called 'The book of psalms' Luke xx. 42. Acts i. 20. which title is given to no other part of scripture, we humbly apprehend, that David's songs are only intended here. We are not ignorant, that turning other scripture-songs into metre, with a view of introducing them into the worship of God, was in contemplation, but not executed, by the church of Scotland in the second period of reformation *; and most allow, that if adding these to our psalms, was all the alteration which is contended for by some, much of our reasoning on this subject would be of no force, and probably our pains altogether spared.

'Spiritual songs,' we presume, mean those psalms which bear the title of Songs, as many of them do: the apostle might well call them songs, since David himself did so: one is called 'A psalm or song,' Psal. xcii. another 'A song or psalm,' Psal. cviii. Yea, many of the psalms may be called Spiritual Songs, according to Calvin's explication, 'They are called Spiritual, for the reasons given by Dr Edwards, and because they are opposite to the carnal songs of the profane.'

Having attempted to explain the terms in their scriptural sense, we shall now proceed to speak more particularly on this head; And here we are led to make the following observations:

First that we ought to have a tender concern about one anothers spiritual interests.---We are required 'to teach

* See an act of assembly, August 1647.

‘teach and admonish one another;’ thus to copy after Christ’s example, ‘in having compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way,’ Heb. v. 2. But to perform this much neglected duty in a successful manner, it is necessary that we ourselves ‘be full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able to admonish one another,’ Rom. xv. 14. That it really be an evil for which we admonish our brother. Eli admonished Hannah for drunkenness, when she was only overwhelmed with sorrow of heart, 1 Sam. i. 14.--19. To admonish a person with a fault of which he is innocent, is like running a lancet into sound flesh, instead of a boil, that never fails to occasion present and after pain. That it be done seasonably; sometimes sudden reproofs have struck sinners with conviction, but they often only exasperate. In this age when people are so much under the baleful influence of pride, if they are reprov’d in company, they are apt to think, that disparagement, rather than reformation is intended, and hence will not hereby be reclaimed. Some will confess these faults in private, which pride will prompt them to justify before a company. That it be performed with prudence; this is absolutely necessary for enabling us to distinguish the stations and dispositions of mankind: The apostle Paul gives us a direction, which clearly shews the necessity of this distinction; ‘Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father, and the younger men as brethren,’ 1 Tim. v. 1. We must also consider well the disposition of the person whom we admonish: some are like houses covered with tile, that will not kindle tho’ a fire-brand fall on them; but, others are like these covered with straw, ready to catch fire by every spark; some like thorns that may be handled without harm, provided it be done with care; but if with roughness, they will fetch blood, ‘And of some have compassion making a difference,’

B

difference; Jude 22. And love should appear eminently in the whole; admonishing a brother, is, 'taking the mote out of his eye,' Mat. vii. 5. which must be done with the greatest tenderness: when we lay aside virulence, and admonish with an air of compassion and regard, we will be sure not to gail if we do not gain an offender. 'Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour and not suffer sin upon him,' Levit. xix. 17. But alas! These are methods little pursued by the professors of religion in this age: instead of them, most people flatter to the face and revile one another behind their backs, which is acting a cruel and an unchristian part.

Secondly, That this duty of 'teaching' and 'admonishing one another' is performed by judicious worshippers, in the exercise of singing psalms. This observation arises from the manner in which our Apostle expresseth himself in the text: he saith not 'teaching and admonishing one another' from Psalms, as in some other places of scripture, (Acts viii. 35 and chap. xxviii. 35) but in them. This ordinance agrees in several respects with the reading and preaching of the word, for the book of Psalms contains a great variety of necessary cautions and admonitions, which the pious worshippers in the act of singing direct to each other. In this manner divine grace enables them to enkindle, in each other's heart, a flame of love; reciprocally they enliven their zeal, and stir up one another to glorify God ‡.

Thirdly,

‡ "The breath of praise mutually fans one another's souls; kindles a divine heat, and blows it up into a flame; and so every one contributes something, to another's good, and receives some help from every other."

HARRISON the excellency of singing.

Thirdly, That singing praise to God is his ordinance in the New Testament church as well as it was in the Jewish. This ordinance seems evident from the very light of nature, and hence it was performed by Heathens to their deities †. Such Heathens 'will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation,' who refuse this piece of adoration to the Lord. This ordinance belonged not to the ceremonial law, for it was celebrated by Moses and the Israelites at their red-sea deliverance, (Exo. xv.) before the promulgation of this law; and it was esteemed more excellent than any of the ritual institutions; hence saith the Psalmist, 'I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs' Ps. lxi. 30, 31. By this ordinance we profess our love to, and confidence in God, yea we acknowledge him as worthy of all adoration; these are duties of the moral law, and, therefore, must have a place in the Christian church, as well as in the Jewish. Much is said in the New Testament to warrant this duty; Christ vindicated the multitude, in 'praising God with a loud voice,' at his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, Luke xix. 37, 39. He and his disciples sang 'an hymn' at the celebration of the last passover, Mark xiv. 26. 'Paul and Silas, at midnight prayed and sung praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them,' Acts xvi. 25. Add to all, that we have sundry precep's which expressly require it:--
 'Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spi-

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'ritual

† Plutarch says, that singing and music, among the ancient Greeks, were wholly employed in the worship of their gods; and laments their profanation and abuse in latter times, when they were brought into the theatre.

• ritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart
 • to the Lord, Ephes. v. 19. Instead of excess in jollity
 • the apostle James directs us to praise God. 'Is any a-
 • mong you afflicted? Let him pray: is any among you
 • merry? Let him sing psalms,' James v. 13.

It is trifling in the matters of God to allege as some do, that this duty is recommended only to them who are Merry; for then it would follow that prayer is a duty pointed out only to them who are Afflicted. It is no less absurd in others to insist that singing the praises of God in Christian worship should be as well laid aside as musical instruments. The reason is plain, because the former is a duty of the moral law, whose obligation can never be cancelled, the latter of the ceremonial, which is now abrogated. Neither does it appear, that these instruments of music were used in the synagogue, which resembled the manner of worship performed in Christian assemblies much more than the temple service did. Moreover, it might as well be alleged, that the exercise of prayer should be laid aside, in New Testament worship, since we offer not incense, which accompanied it in the temple, Luke i. 10. But, finally, it is a mere sophistical objection against this duty, That in prayer we confess ourselves guilty of some of these sins which we were praising God for pardoning immediately before. Surely we may sing what does not immediately belong to our case, and may praise God for redeeming others from the sins under which we yet groan; this may strengthen our faith in the redemption from our sins also, and excite us highly to esteem this glorious privilege. But objections of this kind do not properly fall under our consideration in this discourse; — we, therefore, proceed to observe,

Fourthly, That the 'psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs' which are contained in the book of psalms, were
 all

all wrote under the influences of the Holy Ghost, as a spirit of inspiration. They are a stream flowing from the same fountain of goodness, with the other parts of divine revelation. A stream which for many ages has been running for the refreshment of the Lord's vineyard. They bear the same signatures of divine revelation which are stamped on all the parts of sacred scripture. Yea, tho' all the parts of God's word are so very illustrious, like the rays of the Sun, that it would be dangerous to attempt drawing a line of distinction between them; yet such excellency and sweetness has the book of psalms*, that Luther used to call it 'The little Bible, and summary of the Old Testament.' How excellent and sweet is this book which draws us from converse with men and things, by directing us to communion with God in his sanctuary, and to solace our souls in himself! This is to be in the mount with God, and we do not understand ourselves aright if we do not say with the disciples, 'Lord it is good for us to be here,' Matt. xvii. 4. No book of scripture is more helpful to the devotion of saints than this; it has been so in all ages since ever it was written, and the several parts of it are addressed 'to the chief musician' for the service of the church. Instead of excluding any part of David's psalms from the worship of God, we should rather with pleasure reflect, that in singing them, we offer to God the same praises which were offered to him in the days of David, and other godly kings of Judah. Yea, such perfection is in these sacred poems, that they never will turn thread-bare; and so replete are they with comfort, that they can never be exhausted §.

Fifthly,

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* Licet omnes Scriptura divina, Dei gratiam spiret: precipue tamen dulcis psalmodum liber. Ambrose.

§ See Mr Henry's preface to his commentary on the book of Psalms.

Fifthly, That in singing the psalms of David, it was never intended we should apply every passage of them to ourselves. If this observation is not attended to, we cannot sing 'with understanding,' yea, many places we cannot sing at all; and the Jewish church could not otherwise have sung with propriety. Sometimes the passage may not suit our age; as, 'I have been young and now am old,' &c. Psal. xxxvii. 25. In other places frames opposite to ours may be expressed, as when one rejoicing in the Lord sings, 'Thy wrath lieth hard upon me. While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted,' Ps. lxxxiii. 7. 15. Nor can we in the literal sense apply these passages which respect the Mosaic institutions:--- 'Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar,' Ps. cxviii. 27. The rule to guide us in singing many of David's psalms, is, 'That we sing them with the same frame of mind in which we ought to read them, and express these acts of faith which are agreeable to the gospel dispensation.' Sometimes we are to consider the subject-matter of them, as containing an account of these providences which we are liable to, rather than these we are presently under; and to improve them so as to excite those graces which ought to be exercised in like circumstances, when it shall please God to place us in them. And, indeed, if this rule is not admitted, many of the psalms must be excluded from being read as well as from being sung in the worship of God; for the same devout affections are necessary for the one which are for the other.

Sixthly, That the 'psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs,' which the Holy Ghost has indited, and not human composures should alone be the subject matter of our praises. This being the leading truth we proposed to establish by this discourse, we crave your patience, while we offer the following things, for its illustration:
1st, The

1st, There are various passages in 'the book of Psalms' which seem to shew, that it was intended by the Spirit for New Testament times. Hence, the Psalmist says, Pf. lii. 9. 'I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done it. But I will declare for ever, I will sing praises to the God of Jacob, Pf. lxxv. 9. We will shew forth thy praises to all generations, Pf. lxxix. 13. I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever : with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations, Pf. lxxxix. 1. This shall be written for the generation to come ; and the people which shall be created, shall praise the Lord, Pf. cii. 18. I will extol thee, my God, O King, and I will bless thy name for ever and ever,' Pf. cxlv. 1 *. Not only so, but there are Psalms which seem to have been penned with a direct view to the times of the Messiah, as when his life, (Psal. lxix.) death, (Psal. xxii.) resurrection, (Psal. xvi. 10.) and ascension, (Psal. xlvii. 5. and lxviii. 18.) are spoken of as events already past. One of the Psalms is almost repeated in the New Testament, (viz. Psal. xcv. repeated in Heb. iii. and iv. chapters,) another is quoted and applied to the state of the Christian church at that time, (Psal. xlv. 22. cited Rom. viii. 36.) and the prophets spake of 'songs of praise' being offered to the Lord by the Gentiles when brought into a church state. 'From the uttermost parts of the earth have we heard songs, and even glory to the righteous, Isa. xxiv. 16. Let the the

* Here the judicious Mr Henry thus comments, "I will bless thee for ever and ever." This intimates, 1. That he resolved to continue in the work to the end of his life, throughout his EVER in this world. 2. "That the psalms he penned should be made use of in praising God by the church to the end of time," 2 Chrenthians xxix, 30.

• the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice,
 • the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: Let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of
 • the mountains. Let them give glory unto the Lord,
 • and declare his praise in the Islands,' Isa xii. 11, 12.

2dly, We have no command in ' the New Testament ' for altering ' the Psalms of David ' under the pretence of making them more suitable to christian worship; or to compose others to be put in their place. To turn the Psalms into metre is not altering their meaning more than a just translation of the ' Old and New Testament ' is a new Bible. In the light of divine revelation, we may presume to say, That had Christ, the alone King and Head of his church, deemed the Psalms of David unsuitable for that worship which he has instituted in her, he would have directed his Apostles to accommodate these unto her spiritual nature, or inspired those men to write in their stead other Psalms which breathe more of the spirit of the gospel; and they in writing so much against retaining ritual observances would have hinted something about the impropriety of singing these Psalms. — But so far is it from any of these being the case, that we find the Apostles highly esteemed, and frequently quoted, ' the Psalms as the oracles of God.' And nothing is to be admitted into his worship but what has the sanction of his divine authority. ' But
 • in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines
 • the commandments of men, Mat. xv. 9. As Moses
 • was admonished of God, when he was about to make
 • the tabernacle. For see, saith he, that thou make all
 • things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the
 • mount,' Heb. viii. 5.

3dly, We have no example in the New Testament, to authorise that alteration, in ' the Psalms of David,' which is contended for, We must allow, that scripture
 . examples

examples carry with them sometimes the weight of a command: Hence our grand authority for observing the Sabbath on the first day of the week, is derived from the practice of the Apostles, and first Christians, who stately met together for public worship on that day: But no such example can be produced for altering 'the Psalms.' We have already attempted to shew that the HYMN which Christ and his apostles sang at celebrating the passover and the Lord's supper, was part of David's Psalms; and that these are only intended by 'the psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs' which are mentioned in the epistles of Paul *.

We

* The sentiments of the laborious Mr Baxter are so much to our purpose we cannot pass them by: They are so convincing that they must have weight with all; and we would hope that they will have great authority with those who are agreed with him in his latitudinarian notions of church communion, and his doctrines of the gospel, being a new law, requiring faith and repentance as the conditions of it: In his Ecclesiastical Cases of Conscience, Quest. 124. is proposed; thus:

"Is it lawful to use David's psalms in our assemblies?"

'Ans. Yes: 1st, Christ used them at his last supper, as is most probable; and he ordinarily joined with the Jews that used them, and so did the Apostles.

'2. It is lawful to read or say them; therefore, also, to sing them; for saying and singing difference not the main end.

'3. They are suitable to our case, and were the liturgy of the Jewish church, not on a ceremonial account, "but for that fitness which is common to us with them."

'4. We are commanded in the New Testament to sing psalms; and we are not ordered to compose new ones;

‘ We are not unacquainted here, some do plead, that David’s Psalms are made more agreeable to the spirit of the gospel, when they are cited in the New Testament: (Psal. cxviii. 26. is cited Luke xix. 37, 38. Psal. li. 2, 3. cited Acts iv. 23, 24.) They must be ignorant indeed, who cannot account for this alteration in another manner. The idioms of the Hebrew and Greek languages considerably differ; and the more literal the translation

‘ ones; nor can every person make psalms who is commanded to sing psalms. And if it be lawful to sing psalms of our own or our neighbours making, much more of God’s making by his Spirit in his Prophets.

‘ Object. They are not suitable to all our cases, nor to all the assembly.

‘ Anf. 1. We may use them in that measure of suitability to our cases which they have. You may join with a man in prayer, who expresses half of your wants, though he expresses not all. Else you must join with no man in the world.

‘ 2. If ungodly men are present when the faithful speak to God, must we not speak our proper case because they are present? The minister in church-administrations speaketh principally in the name of the faithful, and not of hypocrites. Must he leave out of his prayers, all that is proper for the godly, merely because some wicked men are there. No more must the church do in singing unto God.

‘ 3. They that cannot speak every word in a psalm, just as their own case, may yet speak it as instructive; otherwise they might not sing or say it.

‘ But the sectarian objections against singing David’s Psalms are so frivolous, that I will not tire the reader with any more.’—Baxter’s practical works, vol. I. page 692.

translation is from the one language into the other, the greater will be the alteration in words. Moreover, the quotations from the Old Testament which we have in the New, were taken from the Septuagint translation; then generally read in the Jewish synagogues, because best understood. But if this exception has any weight, it is in favour of altering the Old Testament altogether, and adapting it also more to the spirit of the gospel; for the same liberty is taken in quoting it in the New Testament *, as is used with the psalms; and thus we shall have a new Bible, suitable for our new Psalm-book †. And,

* See Luke iv. 18. 19. Acts vii. with Henry's observation on verse 1. also chap. viii. 32, 33

† ' We come now to the matter to be sung. There are very few who allow singing to be an ordinance, that will deny it to be our duty to sing the psalms of David and other spiritual songs, which we frequently meet with in scripture. Some, indeed, have contested the expediency of a Christian assembly's making use of several Old Testament phrases, that are contained therein. And others have alleged, that the phrase ought to be altered in many instances (especially in those which have a peculiar reference to the Psalmist's personal circumstances) and others substituted in their room, which are matter of universal experience. But this argument will appear to have less weight in it; inasmuch as all the arguments, that are brought in defence of making these alterations in the book of Psalms, as they are to be sung by us, will equally hold good, as applicable to the ordinance of reading them, and it may be, will as much evince the necessity of altering the phrase of scripture, in several other parts thereof, as well as in these. For it will follow from thence, that if some psalms are not

And, indeed, something of this kind is already attempted, with regard to the New Testament †. To deter from all such presumptuous attempts, the canon of scripture is shut up with awful solemnity. ' For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book,' Rev. xxii. 18, 19. Amidst the many attempts made to weaken the authority of scripture, and the schemes which have a tendency this way, it is consolatory to reflect on our having God's promise, that his word shall never be destroyed, or any part of it lost.... ' For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled,' Mat. v. 8.

athly, The psalms of David are a blessed mean of edification to the church of Christ; and, therefore, it is dangerous to attempt making alterations in them. We may

' not to be sung by a Christian assembly, in the words in which they were at first delivered, and consequently are not to be read by them; because the phrase thereof is not agreeable to the state of the Christian church; and, therefore, it is to be altered when applied to our present use; the same may be said concerning other parts of scripture; and then the word of God, as it was at first given to us, is no more to be read, than to be sung by us,' Ridgley's body of divinity, p. 572. Glas. edit.

† The book referred to is, Harwood's liberal translation of the New Testament.

may expect the blessing of God on what his Spirit has indited, and none can tell the number of men and women, to whom the Lord has blessed this part of his word for their edification. The Psalms have been sung and read with great devotion in all ages of the church, the words of the prophet have to some been like fiery darts which wound the soul, and then like balm which communicates a divine sweetness and healing virtue thereunto. They have been a mean of comforting the people of God in their greatest discouragements. When the good but timorous Melancthon was cast down with the gloomy aspect of things, at the dawn of the reformation, the renowned and heroic Luther used to cheer him up, and said, "Come let us sing the forty-sixth psalm, & let earth & hell do their worst" they have been sung with the greatest emotion of spirit by the martyrs, when encountering death in all its horrors. These heroes of our religion, like the dying swan did sing in the most melodious manner at their death; and their triumphant singing the 'psalms of David,' was immediately succeeded by the 'song of Moses and the Lamb.'

5thly. To dispute the propriety of singing the psalms of David in Christian worship, is deviating from 'the footsteps of the flock.' It is true, the practice of the Christian church, in the first ages of Christianity, lies in a great measure hid in the impenetrable shades of antiquity; yet we may learn from the page of history, that her external peace, and connexions with this world, by too natural a consequence, gradually led her from her original purity and simplicity; this need not surprise us when

§ Augustine, in his retirement before his baptism, used to read and sing the psalms of David in this manner, and they had this desirable effect.

See the lives of the primitive fathers, p. 479.

when within half a century past, we see such an alteration in the religious profession and practice of 'some churches.' However, it appears that the fathers did not deem the psalms of David unsuitable for Christian worship, in regard they sang them, and spake so pathetically in their behalf: Witness what Athanasius (who lived in the fourth century) wrote of them. 'That this book refers to all the histories of the Old Testament, that it includes all the prophecies of Jesus Christ, that it expresses all the opinions we ought to have, that it contains the prayers that should be made, that it compriseth all the precepts of morality.' He observes further, 'That there are some psalms historical, some moral, some prophetical, besides those which consist of prayers and praises. He shews that the psalms represent to every one of the faithful, the state of his own soul, that every one may see himself there represented, and may observe from the different passions, there expressed, what he feels in his own heart, and that in whatever state any one is, there he may find words suitable to his present disposition, rules for his conduct, and remedies for his troubles' He would not have any of the words of the psalms, which may appear simple, changed, under pretence of making them more elegant*. Another of the fathers, who was a cotemporary with Athanasius, thus expresseth himself, 'The book of psalms is a compendium of all divinity; a common shop of medicines for the soul; an universal store-house of good doctrines, profitable to every one in all conditions†.'

We must yield to the current of ancient history, that in the course of three centuries, human compositions were

* Dupin's hist. of ecclesiastical writers, v, II. p. 45. 46

† Basil on Psal. i.

were sung in the worship of God, as well as David's psalms †; but these were concomitants, if not sources of that corruption ‡, which did considerably accelerate that deformation in the church, which brought forth 'the whore of Babylon.' To plead for human compositions being admitted into the worship of God, from their being used in the ancient ages of Christianity, will equally conclude in favours of instrumental music, which was admitted about the same period §. A time of deadness in religion is the ordinary period of a church's declension from the purity of her worship: Men then forgetting the command of God, think of gratifying their own fancies. 'But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve, thro' his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ,' 2 Cor. xi. 3. This is a favourable juncture for the devil to exert himself, when a church is in a slumbering condition. 'But while men slept, his enemy came, and sowed tears among the wheat, and went his way,' Mat. xiii. 25.

The psalms of David were universally sung in all the Protestant churches in Europe, 'till they began to decline from their 'original purity;' and in such of them as human compositions are admitted to be sung in 'public worship,' it is not on this foot that David's Psalms

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† Tertulian writes, That after the celebration of the Lord's supper, every one sung an hymn out of the Bible, or of his own composing.

‡ Paulus Samosutenes appointed women on Easter-day, in the middle of the church, to sing psalms in his own praise. Act. concil. Antioch. apud Euseb. lib. viii. chap. xxxix. page 281.

§ See Broughton's Historical Dictionary in the article Psalmody.

are unsuitable for 'New Testament times.' The advocates for massacring David's Psalms when it serves a purpose, give them many fine appellations, and declare that they read them as a sacred treasure of instruction more than any book in the Old Testament; but this only resembles the crocodiles tears, or like 'Joab asking Amasa if he was in health,' and while he 'took him by the beard to kiss him, he smote him under the fifth rib that he died,' 2 Sam. xx 9, 10. Severing from David's Psalms such parts as the variable humours of men shall deem unsuitable for gospel worship, is the way to give the whole a deadly blow; like cutting a living creature in two, each part will seem at first to preserve some remains of life, but in a short time both will totally expire. We cannot finish this point better than by adopting the words of a learned and ancient commentator: 'David by manifold "psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs," set forth the praises of God, his own faith in his word, exercise and delight in his law, with narrations of God's former and present mercies, and promises of future graces to be fulfilled in Christ; whom he (being a Prophet) knew that he should be of the fruit of his loins, concerning the flesh, and should sit upon his throne: whose incarnation, afflictions, death, resurrection, ascension, and eternal glorious kingdom and priesthood, he sang by the spirit, with such heavenly melody as may not only delight, but draw into admiration every understanding heart, and comfort the afflicted soul, with such consolation as David himself was comforted of the Lord. And these his Psalms have ever since by the church of Israel, and by Christ and his Apostles, and by the saints in all ages, been received and honoured as the oracles of God, cited for confirmation of true religion,' "and sung in the public assemblies as in God's tabernacle and temple, " where

" where they sang praise unto the Lord with the words
 " of David and of Asaph the Seer *."

6thly, To alter the psalms of David from their original sense; or to substitute human compositions in their room, ' in Christian worship' is productive of ' dangerous consequences.' Allow me to point out a few of these, and leave your own minds to suggest many more.

1. This has a tendency to weaken the authority of David's psalms. It is natural for people to have a light opinion of the psalms when they hear them branded with a number of contemptuous epithets †. Will any be much awed by what is opposite to the spirit of the gospel? But objections of this sort equally strike against

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* Ainsworth's Preface to his Annotations on the book of Psalms.

† The advocates for new psalms in order to obtain an exclusion of David's Psalms from God's worship ordinarily call them Jewish psalms. Some of them are blasphemously denominated ' David's cursing Psalms--psalms' which express only the language of a ' fugitive, shepherd, captain, a Jewish king and musician: psalms' which lead us blind-fold over the ' river Jordon, thro' ' the land of Gebal, Ammon and Amalek, unto the ' strong city, and thence unto Edom; thro' the valley of ' Baca, and into Jerusalem; there to wait on the court of burnt-offerings; confined to the drudgery of ' binding sacrifices with cords to the horns of the altar.'--Psalms foreign to any person but David, and could not even be designed for the stated worship of the Jews.---Yea, they are called ' weak and beggarly elements.'---Such language from the mouths of them who profess to believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the only rule of faith and obedience; must appear very strange, and deserves the thanks of Deists.

all the Old Testament, and have a native tendency to strengthen the cause of Deism. What is said against the psalms of David is spoken against 'the Holy Ghost who spake by the mouth of David,' Acts i. 16. Doubtless it would be employing time and talents to better purpose, in attempting a reformation of many things in the church rather than in the psalms of the Spirit's inditing. 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple,' Ps. xix 7.

2. If David's psalms are to be sung, only as mangled according to the pleasure of men: or if they are to be altogether excluded, and human compositions put in their room; none can tell what will be at last sung 'in worshiping assemblies.' I speak of these churches in which these things are looked on as matters of indifference; where people are allowed to use what psalms or hymns they please, and thus to act as the children of Israel in the days of the judges, when 'every man did that which was right in his own eyes,' Judges xvii. 6. After all the members that are severed from the body of the psalms, some new refiners may be for cutting away part of the remainder, under pretence of their being also unsuitable for gospel worship. Considering the many poets, and poetasters, in the world, we know what will be sung in place of David's Psalms, if once excluded. The practice already introduced of ministers composing Hymns which comprise the heads of their sermon will more generally spread: Many of us are but poor preachers, but would make worse poets. — Heads of families will make 'hymns and spiritual songs' which they may reckon suitable to the state of their families. In one church we shall have one sett of such songs, a different one in another: Our Psalms and Anthems will at last become more voluminous than our Bible,

Bible, and more frequently read, which is already become lamentably true, with respect to some 'deluded Sectaries.' Such disorders began even in the apostolic age, and were corrected by the apostle Paul. How is it then, Brethren? When you come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation *.

3. This

* 1 Cor. xiv. 26. To illustrate the danger of alterations as we now treat of, take an extract from an invaluable sermon entitled the TRUST, delivered at the opening of the Synod of Mass and Tiviotdale, by Mr Wilton:---a sermon which we wish was more generally known than it is in the American colonies. 'If man's wisdom be once allowed to add or alter so much as one loop or pin, it will never be easy, or at rest--without the whole tabernacle be new-modelled according to the pattern in his own head. And one cannot tell what may be the consequences of, nor how much the Lord may be displeased with a very small variation from the pattern shewed in the mount. The bearing of the ark upon a new cart, was as harmless and extrinsic an innovation as people could readily fall upon in reference to the house of God; yet was it met with a very sensible token of the divine jealousy. Nor will good meanings and designs be sustained as any whit of an apology for such officious services: It is but a cold reception they get; namely, "Who hath required these things at your hands? For I commanded them not, nor came it so much as into my mind." As the zeal of God's house consumed our Lord himself, and the typical David, both of them, so ought the same spirit to be in all his ministers specially. They ought to do what in them lies by reformation and a spiritual impartial

3. This has a tendency to introduce error into the worship of God. The second commandment requireth us to keep the ordinances of God ' pure and entire:'. While we abide by the Psalms of David we shall effectually secure purity of worship in respect of praising God: But if once we begin to use human compositions in God's worship, we are in imminent danger of being gradually led to sing mere jargon, or men's opinions, instead of the sacred truths of the Spirit's inspiring. This is already verified in the case of some deluded enthusiasts, who, instead of reading the Scripture, or singing the ' Psalms of David' with gravity, always sing such hymns and spiritual songs as breathe their own notions; and are inflamed with their own wild fire. ' And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon,

' impartial exercise of discipline to purge the house of God, 1 Tim. v. 20, 21. Tit. i. 15. and ii. 15. and to watch and withstand from entering into it; all such persons and things, as in the " book of the manner of the house" leave us warrant to be there. For to them hath the Son, which is " over his own house" committed in Trust the ordinances and order of it, with a solemn charge ' to keep them pure and entire,' without any, the least addition, or subtraction, mixture or exchange of one thing for another. Therefore, all such, be who they will, tho' they were even " Kings or Parliaments" who would set up their " posts by God's posts," or their " threshold by his thresholds" to the defiling of his house, and of his holy name, they must withstand. Ezek. xliii. 8. Observable is that word: " For if thou lift up thy tool upon it (viz. the stones of God's altar to hew, polish or make them more slightly) thou hast polluted it." Exo. xx. 25. p. 28, 29.

' thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord,
 ' which he commanded them not. And there went
 ' out a fire from the Lord and devoured them, and they
 ' died before the Lord,' Lev. x. 1. 2. Could it be made
 appear that David's Psalms are not suitable for every
 person, we would not think it so strange to see men so
 fond of other compositions. But this is so far from being
 the case, that to use the warm expressions of Gerhard
 concerning them, " They are a jewel made up of the
 ' gold of doctrine, of the pearls of comfort, of the gems
 ' of prayer. This book is a theatre of God's works, a
 ' sweet field and rosary of promises, a paradise of sweet
 ' fruits, and heavenly delights: An ample sea, wherein
 ' tempest-toss'd souls find richest pearls of consolation:
 ' An heavenly school wherein God himself is chief in-
 ' structor. The abridgement, flower and quintessence
 ' of Scripture. A glass of divine grace representing to
 ' us the sweetest smiling countenance of God in Christ;
 ' and a most accurate anatomy of a Christian soul de-
 ' lineating all its afflictions, motions temptations and
 ' plunges, with their proper remedies *.'

4. Add to the whole, that the danger must be greatly
 increased, when congregations themselves are allowed
 to make alterations in their Psalms. This is too well
 known to have taken place already, is acting a part op-
 posite to presbyterial government, and may produce a
 train of more direful consequences than the abettors of
 it, are aware. The supreme judicatory of the church is
 only invested with the power to ' Set down rules and
 ' directions for the better ordering the public worship
 ' of God and government of his church †.' However,

* This is quoted in that part of Robert's key of the
 Bible which treats on the Psalms.

† ' Act of Assembly of the church of Scotland, Aug.
 6, 1641. Sess. 14. " Since

we are far from pleading that church judicatories have any authority to model the worship of God as they please; the power with which they are clothed is not legislative, but ministerial and executive. The version of Psalms which is of public authority in the church of Scotland, cannot with any propriety now be called Rouses' Version, in regard it has the same human authority with our Confession of Faith. We shall not say that it is the most elegant in respect of the style, yet it is acknowledged to excel in what is far more momentous, viz. in expressing the mind of the Spirit *. And while our religious ancestors discovered about this a flaming zeal for purity of worship, they proceeded with the greatest regularity, and deliberation. It was carefully corrected and amended by the General Assembly of Divines, which met at Westminster;-----an assembly the most grave and learned, that ever sat in the English nation, Complaint being made of the obsolete version of psalms by Sternhold and Hopkins, the parliament desired this assembly

“ Since it hath pleased God to vouchsafe the liberty of general assemblies, it is ordained according to acts of assembly at Edinburgh, 1639, and at Aberdeen, 1640, That no novation in doctrine, worship or government, be brought in or practised in this kirk, unless it be first propounded, examined or allowed in the general assembly, and that transgressors in this kind be censured by presbyteries and synods.”

* ‘ The versions which I think come nearest the original, are the New-England and the Scots; the latter of which I think much preferable to the former; in as much as the sentences are not so transposed in this as in the other, and the lines are much more smooth, and pleasant to be read ’

Ridgley's body of Divinity, page 572

assembly to recommend some others to be used in churches; accordingly they read over Rouse's version, and after several amendments sent it to the house, Nov. 14 1645. with the following recommendation, 'Whereas the honourable House of Commons, by an order bearing date November 20. 1643 have recommended the Psalms published by Mr Rouse to the consideration of the assembly of Divines; the assembly has caused them to be carefully perused, and as they are now altered and amended, do now approve them, and humbly conceive, that they may be useful and profitable to the church, if they are permitted to be publicly sung.'--- Accordingly they were authorized by the two Houses *. But our version comes with the additional authority of the General Assembly of the church of Scotland. It was sent from the Westminster Assembly to them for their approbation, as it was a part of that uniformity in worship which was then intended in Great Britain and Ireland. After being under their serious consideration for several years, as is evident from their several acts relative to it †. Then it was approved of by them, and appointed to be sung in all their churches, as appears from the following act of their commission, 'The Commission of the General Assembly, having with great diligence considered the paraphrase of the psalms in metre, sent from the Assembly of Divines in England, by our commissioners whilst they were there, as it is corrected by former General Assemblies, Committees from

* Neil's hist of the Puritans, vol. II p. 214 4to edit

† See the following acts of Assembly: An act passed August 28, 1647 entitled 'An act for revising the paraphrase of the psalms brought from England.' An act passed August 10, 1648. entitled 'An act for examining the paraphrase of the psalms,' &c.

' from them, and now at last by the brethren, deputed
 ' from the late assembly for that purpose; and having
 ' examined ~~the same~~, do approve this said paraphrase,
 ' as it is now compiled; and therefore, according to the
 ' powers given them by the said Assembly, do appoint
 ' it, to be printed and published for public use; hereby
 ' authorizing the same to be the only paraphrase of the
 ' psalms of David to be sung in the kirk of Scotland;
 ' and discharging the old paraphrase, and any other
 ' than this new paraphrase, to be made use of in any
 ' congregation or family, after the first of May in the
 ' year 1650. And for uniformity in this part of the
 ' worship of God, do seriously recommend to presby-
 ' teries, to cause make publication of this act, and to
 ' take special care that the same be timely put in ex-
 ' ecution, and duly observed *. The uncommon pains
 ' that were taken by these venerable reformers, in the
 ' introduction of this version into the churches, must
 ' set in a stronger light the evil of a precipitant exclu-
 ' sion of it. The psalms which many contend for are not
 ' a version, but only an imitation of David's Psalms, and
 ' seem as far from being like them, as what Michal put
 ' into his bed, when Saul sought to kill him; even an
 ' image with a pillow of goats hair, and covered with
 ' a cloth,' 1 Sam. xix. 13. But it is time for us to pro-
 ' ceed to the

III. Head in the method; which was to illustrate
 the manner of performing this duty of teaching and
 admonishing one another in psalms and hymns, and
 spiritual

* This act is entitled, "An act of the Commission of
 the General Assembly, approving the new paraphrase
 of the psalms in metre, and appointing them to be
 made use of in congregations and families." It passed
 at Edinburgh, November 23. 1649.

spiritual songs, viz. 'By singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord.'

To sing with 'grace in our hearts to the Lord,' the following things are absolutely requisite.

First, That we are actually in a state of grace. It is impossible to sing with grace in the heart where grace is not implanted. They who are interested in Christ by faith can only worship God in an acceptable manner: 'He hath made us accepted in the beloved,' Eph i 6. Our persons must be justified, before our services can be accepted. 'And the Lord hath respect to Abel, and to his offering,' Gen iv. 4. But methinks I hear some making this reply, That unregenerated persons should not then sing the praises of God at all. This inference is only according to the rules of the devil's logic; for the unfitness of men for their duty, will never excuse them from the performance. And it is a greater sin to neglect it, than perform it even in an unsuitable manner. Better to read the word pray, and sing praises even in an unregenerate state, than omit them wholly: this is atheism, that is hypocrisy. Tho' unregenerate men cannot bless God for saving benefits, yet they may for common mercies: The excellencies of his nature, the bounty of his providence, and the offers of his grace, all require returns of praise. Hence all are exhorted to this duty. 'Sing unto the Lord all the earth, Ps xcvi 1. 'Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness and come before his presence with singing, Psal. c. 1, 2. Sing unto the Lord all ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord's Psal. lxxviii 23. In one psalm travellers, prisoners, seafaring-men, and sick people being delivered from their respective distresses, are all commanded 'to praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful work, 'to them the children of men, Ps. cvii. 6-37. More-

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over the confessions of guilt; the supplications for mercy, and deprecations of wrath, which abound in 'the book of psalms' show the mind of the Lord, that even unregenerate persons should sing them, tho' they cannot do it with grace in the heart. If they who are assured of their gracious state only were to sing the praises of God, few would perform it in our worshipping assemblies. The arguments against unregenerate persons singing the praises of God equally conclude against their reading God's word and praying.

Secondly, That we sing the psalms of David with 'some degree of knowledge' of them. We cannot otherwise 'sing with grace in the heart to the Lord.' While the mind is sunk in ignorance concerning what is sung, the affections can never take wing, nor the heart be suitably affected. To sing the psalms without the knowledge of them, is exactly resembling the Papists, who sing in an unknown tongue. We should earnestly seek after the knowledge of this part of God's word. 'I will sing with the Spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also,' 1 Cor. xiv. 15. To sing the praises of God for our edification is highly necessary as in reading his word, that we have a humble dependance on the blessed Spirit for enlightning our minds into the knowledge of them. 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wonderful things out of thy law,' Ps. cxix. 18.

Thirdly, That we sing the Psalms of David with 'grace in a lively exercise.' Every grace should be exercised according to the matter of the psalm; and the exercise of one grace must not exclude the exercise of another. As every note must be sung in its proper place, to render the music pleasant; so every grace must be exercised to make this ordinance profitable. It is too common for God's children to indulge themselves in groundless fears, overwhelming sorrows, and desponding doubts, while

while they are negligent to stir up the nobler graces of faith, love, hope, and delight in God; especially when their present circumstances, and the duties they are engaged in, do call for them. Worshippers engaged in the work of praise, and exercising grace in a suitable manner, while they are highly acceptable to God, also are a representation of the church triumphant, where their frames always bear a proportion to their songs. To attain this we must endeavour to put our hearts in order before we begin by meditation on God, his works and word; thus the musician tunes his instrument before he plays. There was 'silence in heaven for the space of half an hour,' at the opening of the 'seventh seal,' (Rev viii, 1.) so when we begin to praise God, we ought to make a pause till a solemn awe of the Divine Majesty settles down upon our minds, and our graces be excited to lively exercise. 'Awake up my glory, awake psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early' Psal lvii. 8

Fourthly, That we offer to God all our praises in the name of Christ. No other way for our finding acceptance with God; hence it follows in the next verse, '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.' The best Christians bring much guilt with them into God's presence, and while there, they are in danger of contracting more. This renders it absolutely necessary that their praises be performed in Christ's name. By him, therefore, let us offer the 'sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name,' Heb xiii. 15. Our highest praises fall infinitely beneath the excellencies of the divine nature, and as they are our act, are very unworthy of acceptance with God: They stand in great need of being perfumed with the increase of Christ's

merits, as well as our prayers, Rev. viii 3. They who see not the necessity of the Redeemer's mediation to recommend their persons and performances to the divine regard, betray great ignorance of God's perfections, their own unworthiness, and the spirituality of the divine law. So that acts of faith in the righteousness of Christ are absolutely necessary while we are paying to the Lord the tribute of praise: and we have still ground to address him thus, 'If thou, O Lord, shall mark iniquities; O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared,' Psal. cxxx. 3, 4.

Fifthly, That we perform this duty only to the Lord. Thus the text runs, 'singing with grace in your heart to the Lord.' To praise God in obedience to his command, with a view of advancing his declarative glory and to express our supreme love to him, is to do it to the Lord. They who sing the praises of God to manifest their skill in church music to let their melodious voices be heard, and thus sing to please their own fancies, or regale their neighbours ears, sing only to themselves. Such worshippers, if they deserve the name, will meet with the divine abhorrence rather than acceptance. 'I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people will I be glorified *.'

Having finished what I intended in the doctrinal part of this subject, I shall now make some 'practical improvement' of the whole for a conclusion: waving many inferences which might be deduced from what has been said, we shall only take notice of the two following.

First, We may see that God is 'very careful' of his worship. He has set down the right way of worshipping

* Lev. x 3. It may not be improper here to refer the reader to Mr Newman's Directions for the duty of singing.

pling himself in his word, and has not left this to the wisdom and pleasure of men. 'Shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms, and all the laws thereof; and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them' Ezek. xliii. 11. His care about his worship appears in his providing a book of psalms suitable for his church and people in all ages. Men indeed manifest much arrogance in prescribing other ways of worshipping God, than these which he has appointed; and hereby they highly provoke the Divine Majesty. 'In their setting up of their threshold by my threshold; and their posts by my posts, and the wall between me and them, they have defiled my holy name: by their abominations that they have committed: wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger.' — Ezek. xliii. 8:

Secondly, How careful we ought to be, to preserve the worship of God in purity. For the sin of corrupting this, God threatens to 'visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generations.' How careful ought we to be of all God's ordinances, to preserve them in their spiritual purity, when the last command of the Old Testament is, 'Remember the law of Moses my servant, — with the statutes and judgments,' Mal. iv. 4. And Christ's last orders to his disciples were, — 'Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you.' Mat. xxviii. 20. It ought not to be a matter of indifference whether we walk according to the word of God, or the notions of men. The waters of Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, might have been as good for washing away the filth of Naaman's flesh, as these of Jordan, yet they wanted the word of divine institution; therefore they could not be used in faith in order to healing,

nor could God's blessing be expected on them, 2 Kings v. 1.---15. Some indeed tell us, that it is a matter of indifference to them, whether the psalms of David or human compositions are sung in our worshipping assemblies; yet they show a partiality in favour of these; and therefore this seems only an artifice to pave the way for their introduction. But God is highly displeased with indifference in any thing pertaining to his worship —

• So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot I will spue thee out of my mouth,' Rev. iii. 16.

This doctrine may be improved in an use of reproof to the following sorts of persons,

First, such as do not read nor highly esteem the word of Christ. It is awful to reflect on the open contempt which is poured on the word of Christ by some, and the indifference with which it is treated by others. It is only books of entertainment which dwell richly in the greater part of mankind in this age. Earthly kings count it rebellion when people pour contempt on their proclamations by refusing to give them a hearing: It must be very provoking to the Divine Majesty, to behold the manner in which mankind treat the proclamations of grace in his blessed word. • Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded. But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof, I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh: When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you,' Prov. i. 24. - 27.

Secondly Such as exercise no care about their brethren. Many count themselves under no obligation to teach and admonish their fellow men when they are out of the way of duty; but rather they laugh at their vices and irregularities. Instead of admonishing with fidelity

religiosity and tenderness, they say with Cain, that murderer, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' Gen. iv. 9.

Thirdly, Such as do not perform the exercise of praise to God. Quakers deny the warrantableness of singing psalms in New Testament times: there are others who will not do it from a principle of pride, they sit in our worshipping assemblies as if they were struck dumb, and seem to think that praising God would diminish their importance, by reducing them in this respect on a level with the praising multitude. Strange that any should hesitate a moment about the propriety of this duty, and yet expect to j in eternally in singing 'the song of Moses and the Lamb!' Such is the excellency of this exercise, that it includes all duties in it, being a mixture of perfumes arising from them all.

Fourthly, Such as tho' they sing the praises of God 'regard the music' more than the 'frames of their hearts,' These do not 'make melody in their hearts to the Lord.' We would by no means condemn people for paying regard to external harmony; there should be melody in our voice as well as in our hearts, and without this, discord and confusion must ensue. But there is a greater danger of neglecting the frame of our hearts than this. It is the heart God looks to, and we should be most concerned about having it well ordered before him. It is not the voice, but the desire; not the sweet music, but the heart being deeply engaged; not our loud singing, but the fervour of our religious affections, that are music in God's ears*. 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart: O God, thou wilt not despise.' Ps. li. 17. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.' John iv. 24.

Fifthly,

* Non vox sed votum, non musica cordula, sed cor.
Non clamans sed amans captat in aure Dei. Augustine.

Fifthly, Such as neglect to sing praises to God 'in their families.' To worship God in our houses seems evident from the light of nature; hence the Heathens had their household gods: It is founded in equity that for family-mercies we have family-thanksgiving. The Psalmist seems to mark the religious man's door with this inscription, 'The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacle of the righteous: the right-hand of the Lord doth valiantly,' Pf. cxviii. 15. The primitive Christians were so intent on praising God, that they sung psalms at their meals †. Jerome speaking of Bethlehem, where he lived, and which he so much extols in his letter to Marcella, saith, 'You could not go into the field, but you would hear the plow-man at his hallelujahs, the mower at his hymns, and the vine-dresser singing David's psalms.' Singing psalms made up a great part of the devotion of these Christians in the public assembly, more privately in their families, in their retirements in the closet and on their waking beds ‡. What a pity is it that family religion should be so much neglected in this age? O how beautiful is it for a family to join in the acts of divine worship, the master leading the devotion and singing the praises of God, the servants heightning the harmony, and the children like little birds sweetning the whole with their more shrill voice! A man of God used to say, 'This is the way to hold forth godliness, like "Rachab's scarlet thread," to such as pass by our windows.'— And he further added, 'They do well who pray morning and evening in their families, but they do better who pray, and read the scriptures; but they do best.

† Enquiry into the constitution, discipline, unity and worship of the primitive church. Part II. page 8

‡ Hammon's preface to his paraphrase on the psalms.

' best of all, who pray, and read, and sing psalms; and
 ' Christians should ' covet earnestly the best gifts' *.
 A very learned prelate writes concerning the necessity
 of family religion in these strong terms: ' Constant fa-
 ' mily worship is so necessary to keep alive and to main-
 ' tain a taste of God, and religion in the minds of men,
 ' that where it is neglected, I do not see how any fa-
 ' mily can in reason be esteemed a family of Christians,
 ' or, indeed, to have any religion at all †.' It was the
 uniform practice among the members of the reformed
 church in France, to worship God in their houses by
 singing his praise. As an ingenious writer informs us,
 ' That persons of all ranks sung psalms not only in the
 ' churches, but in their families; and no gentleman
 ' professing the reformed religion, would sit down at
 ' his table, without praising God by singing. Yea, it
 ' was a special part of their morning and evening wor-
 ' ship in their several houses, to sing God's praises ‡.'
 How striking is the similarity of practice among the
 people of God in different periods and places when re-
 ligion flourisheth among them? It is not sufficient for
 heads of families to worship God for themselves in their
 closets, but they are to perform it in their private ca-
 pacity. They ought to be commanders in the service of
 the King of glory, after the example of Abraham, of
 whom he said, ' For I know him, that he will com-
 ' mand his children, and his household after him, and
 ' they shall keep the way of the Lord,' Gen. xviii. 19.
 A commander is not only to do his own duty, but to or-
 der all under him to do theirs also. What would a king
 think

* Mr Philip Henry's life.

† Tillotson's sermon concerning family religion; in
 his works, vol. III. page 163.

‡ Quick's synodicon in Gallia reformatata, vol I. p. 8,

'think of one who would only fight himself, but allow his souldery to fall away upon the enemy? Surely he would look upon him as a traitor. Let every head of a family, who lives in the neglect of family worship, be alarmed with the thunder of these words, 'Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name;' Jer: x. 25. There we find such families ranked with heathens.

Sixthly, Such as pretend that they 'cannot join' in singing the psalms of David, because of the 'many objections' which they have against them. Let us now proceed to hear, and attempt to answer these.

It is true, that the objections which are ordinarily produced, carry in them such reflections on the Ever-blessed Spirit, who endited the psalms and cast such reproach on the 'generation of God's children,' who in all ages have sung them, that they scarcely deserve the notice of them who believe that the book of psalms is part of canonical scripture. However, we shall not avail ourselves of any forbidding appearance in their general aspect, but proceed to consider them in order.

Object 1. Many passages in David's psalms breathe such a cruel and revengeful spirit against his enemies, as is quite opposite to the spirit of the gospel; and, therefore, other compositions more suitable, ought to be sung in the Christian church.

Ans. This objection against David's Psalms was wont to be urged only by Deists, who thereby meant to weaken the divine authority of these sacred poems †. Indeed if these passages were the effects of malice or passion,

† See Dr Chandler's review of a Deistical book entitled, 'The history of the man after God's own heart' in which the Dr. in a very learned manner, refutes the charge of cruelty brought against king David.

passion, it could not be admitted that the Spirit inspired
 ed them. Some Socinians gloss the matter thus, They
 alledge that it was lawful under the old Testament dis-
 pensation to hate enemies, and to imprecate the divine
 vengeance on them. They found their opinion on this
 verse in the Gospels, 'Ye have heard that it have been
 said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine e-
 nemy,' Mat. v. 43. Our Lord Jesus Christ saith not
 that Moses or the prophets taught us to hate our ene-
 mies, but 'it hath been said,' viz. by the Scribes and
 Pharisees, who corrupted the law by their false inter-
 pretations, and unwritten traditions. That forgiveness of
 injuries in opposition to malice and revenge, was a doc-
 trine which the Spirit of God had taught the Old Tes-
 tament saints, (and therefore what our Lord Christ has
 said in the gospels on this head is not new, but an il-
 lustration and defence of what was already written) must
 appear evident to those who attentively peruse the writ-
 ings of Moses and the prophets. To see this in a con-
 vincing point of light let us from thence select the fol-
 lowing passages. 'If thou meet thine enemies ox or ass
 going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him a-
 gain. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee ly-
 ing under his burden and wouldst forbear to help him;
 thou shalt surely help with him,' Exod. xxiii. 4, 5 ---
 'Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, for he is thy broth-
 er: Thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian because thou
 wast a stranger in his land.' Deut. xxiii. 7. 'If thine
 enemy be hungry give him bread to eat: and if
 he be thirsty give him water to drink: for thou
 shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord
 shall reward thee,' Prov. xxv. 21, 22. 'Rejoice
 not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart
 be glad when he stumbleth: Lest the Lord see it and
 it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.
 ' Say

' Say not I will do so to him, as he hath done to me: I
 ' will render to the man according to his work,' Prov.
 xxiv. 17, 18. 29 ' If I rejoiced at the destruction of him
 ' that hated me, or lift up myself when evil soned him,
 ' (neither have I suffered my mouth to sin, by wishing
 ' a curse to his soul;) if the men of my tabernacle said
 ' not, O that we had of his flesh! we cannot be satis-
 ' fied' Job xxxi. 29.

This objection is now found in the mouths of a set of
 religious professors, who would take it ill to be ranked
 with Deists or Socinians. Their catholic love is so great
 that it overflows the land-marks betwixt truth and error,
 which our reformers set up. But it would appear to be
 altogether an inconsistent scheme: At least these who
 are engaged in a testimony for reformation principles
 have but a small share of this love; while it embraces those
 who are drenched in superstition, or caried away with
 sectarian delusions. Moreover, these pretenders to this ex-
 tensive love, do not reduce it to practise, more than others,
 when they receive real or supposed injuries. Happy would
 it be for them, if they really had attained to such a de-
 gree of charity, ' as the man after God's own heart was'
 possessed of, whom they so severely censur. ' I delivered
 ' him that without cause is mine enemy,' Psa. vii. 4 --
 ' Who is me that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the
 ' tents of Kedar. My soul hath long dwelt with him
 ' that hateth peace. I am for peace; but when I speak
 ' they are for war,' Psal. cxx. 5, --- 7. While people are
 so deficient of that for the want of which they unjust-
 ly blem the royal Psalmist, they themselves stand self-
 condemned. ' Therefore thou art inexcusable. O man
 ' whosoever thou art, that judgest: for wherein thou
 ' judgest another thou condemnest thyself, for thou dost
 ' the same things,' Rom. ii. 1.

But

But in order to rescue the reputation of David from the cruel fangs of these libellers, let the observation already made be carefully attended to, viz. That the book of Psalms and the New Testament were both endited by the same Spirit. If then the objection has any weight, it necessarily supports a contradiction in our Bible, and makes the Holy Ghost to allow dispositions of soul, untrier the Old Testament economy, which class with these required in the New. To wipe off the stain which some mean to fix on David's character, in respect of rancorous resentment against his enemies, sundry interpretations have been given of these passages. . . . Some think that the words are capable of another translation, as when it is said, ' Let them be confounded and ' put to shame that seek after my soul. Let them be as ' chaff before the wind; and let the angel of the Lord ' chase them. Let destruction come upon them at un- ' awares,' Psal xxxv. 4, 5, 8. Accordingly they allege, that the words may be put in the future tense, not the imperative mood; thus, ' They shall blush and be a- ' shamed that seek after my soul, they shall be as chaff ' before the wind, and the angel of the Lord shall chase ' them. Destruction shall come upon them unawares*.' As to what is said in the hundred and ninth psalm, some critics in sacred literature observe, that it ought not to be numbered among those psalms wherein David is supposed to throw out imprecations on his enemies, it being only a rehearsal of those curses which his adversaries denounced against himself. But we apprehend the character of the sweet singer in Israel can be defended without the aid of these ingenious methods, by considering him as a prophet, and as a type of Christ. As a prophet he may be viewed as rather foretelling,

E

thau

* Dr Hammond's paraphrase on the book of psalms.

than wishing for the event, which would inevitably follow on these ways of impiety, which his enemies practised. And this he did from a principle of charity that thereby they might be alarmed with their danger, and determined to turn to the Lord.—As a type of Christ, he spake of these enemies, as the enemies of God's declarative glory. As he personated the Son of God, he might warrantably denounce the vengeance of God upon his enemies. The hundred and ninth psalm is expressly applied in this manner by Peter, who sets forth the necessity of the predictions in its being accomplished, when he saith, '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 a guide to them who took Jesus,' Acts i. 16. 20.

We must carefully distinguish betwixt the enemies of God's glory and our own. These we are to forgive agreeable to the directions which we have in both Testaments; but those we are not, for they stand accursed by his law for their open rebellion. To say we do forgive rebels against our rightful sovereign, would argue disloyalty, as well as an usurpation of his prerogative. If we do not attend to this distinction, we shall not be able to reconcile even some parts of the New Testament with others. For tho' our Lord has said, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you,' Mat. v. 44 Yet it is written in other places, 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha,' 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Alexander the copper-smith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works,' 2 Tim. iv. 14 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar, the souls of them that were

‘ were slain for the word of God; and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood, on them that dwell on the earth,’ Rev. vi. 9. 19. To remove this difficulty we must view the persons whom our Lord enjoins us to forgive as personal enemies, and these in the other passages as enemies to God’s declarative glory.--- Because the injury they did his servants, was not from enmity at their persons, but his cause which they espoused. So that while we are to forgive our personal enemies, we may warrantably pray for judgments on ‘ the beast ’ and the ‘ false prophet,’ being the avowed enemies of God’s declarative glory, Rev. xix. 20. To all such presumptuous persons as arraign the words of the blessed Spirit at the bar of their judgments, and charge him with inspiring the psalmist with revengeful expressions, we would just say with the apostle, ‘ Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God,’ Rom. ix. 20. As the scriptures are a revelation from heaven, it is our duty to submit to their determinations and heartily acquiesce in what is written *.

Object 2. The psalms of David were penned to suit the Old Testament church in her distinguishing peculiarities; and therefore, they are not fit to be sung in gospel worship.

Ans. We readily grant that important truth which is contained in the premises, but by no means is the inference

* The judicious Durham mentions this as one of the sins we commit in praising God. “ Not assenting, to and giving God the glory in the acknowledgement of the justness of his severest threatenings, and the most fearful scripture imprecations.”

See his exposition of the Ten Commandments, p. 81.

inference admissible. The Apostle's rule for the right improvement of the Old Testament, should carefully be attended to 'For whatsoever things were written afore-time, were written for our learning; that we thro' patience, and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope,' Rom xv. 4. As the same devout affections are necessary for reading the scriptures as for singing psalms, this objection strikes against that as well as this. Moreover, if it has any force with it, this must fall on reading the writings of Moses and the prophets, in God's worship; because they were also adapted to the Old Testament church, and her peculiarities. But in order to dispel the mist in which it is intended by this objection to involve the psalms of David, let us attentively consider the sequel:—

The peculiarities of the Jewish church may be arranged under two general heads. Some of them were prefigurations of the peculiar glories of the Christian œconomy; while others having no typical references, served only to distinguish the Jewish church from the neighbouring nations, or to display the divine condescension towards her in that immature state. The peculiarities of both kinds are undoubtedly abrogated. But it is strange from hence to infer, that there is an impropriety in using such words and phrases in our psalms as have a reference to them. The objection proceeds upon this false hypothesis, viz: That the words and phrases in the psalms, which express these abrogated peculiarities signify nothing more. The peculiarities of the first class not only express the type, but include the antitype, within the compass of their meaning. It was owing to this that they had such a noble tendency to animate the hearts and establish the faith and hopes of the fathers. This observation being admitted, it needs but a short process of reasoning to display the propriety of

of using them judiciously in evangelical worship, **hence** in several important respects, they belong to the New Testament church.

Neither is it just to infer from the peculiarities of the second class, the absolute impropriety of using in our psalms the words and phrases which signify them. Christians are surely bound not only to celebrate the goodness of God to themselves, but his kindness to his ancient people and this cannot be done in more proper words than these, which the believing Jews used. Shall the sacred hymns of antiquity be laid aside by Christians, because they abound in phrases which signify peculiarities now superseded? Should they not rather be used with gratitude, and these very phrases be deemed graceful beauties in our gospel worship, when we celebrate the displays of God's love in these periods, in which the peculiarities expressed by them were sanctified by divine institution. The ancient instances of God's love are most happily expressed in an old style, and more striking words to celebrate them cannot be found than these used by the Lord's people who were favoured with them, and in which they gave vent to their enraptured hearts. Unskilled they are in sacred music, who do not know how to use king David's lyre in singing the honours of divine love in its brightest displays to the Christian church. Tho' we do not admit instrumental music in our churches, yet we see no impropriety in making use of the words 'psaltery, harp, cymbal,' &c. in our psalmody, when it is known they are used in an accommodated sense, which can well be supported by scripture-precedents, and the uncondemned practice of the church in other cases. Yea, some have thought that these typified not only the joy and exaltation of heart with which God is to be praised in New

Testament worship, but also shadowed forth the manner of it, by vocal music*.

As the writings of the Old Testament are a part of canonical scripture, there is a peculiar beauty in transferring their phrases into New Testament worship: although the rites expressed by these are now laid aside. There seems to be a great propriety in our expressing our belief, that the writings of Moses and the prophets are part of God's word, in our sacred songs, as well as in other acts of divine worship, and as a demonstration of that it is necessary to use ancient style in our praising God. Surely there is no impropriety in singing sometimes in Mosaic style, while the church is militant, when she is in a triumphant state does 'sing the song of Moses' as well as of the Lamb. To banish the style

* "As for church-music, for organs, and the like, these primitive ages were wholly ignorant of them; for it cannot rationally be conceived that in those days of continual persecution or violence, they could either use or preserve them; all that they looked after was to sing in rhyme, metre, tune, and concert, to offer up unto God, the praises of their voices, lips, and mouths, which Clemens Alexandrinus thinks was emblematised or shadowed forth by those musical instruments mentioned in the hundred and fiftieth psalm; where, *as it is*, we are commanded to praise God on the psaltery, that is on the tongue, because the tongue is the psaltery of the Lord, and to praise him on the harp, by which we must understand the mouth; and to praise him upon the loud sounding cymbals, by which the tongue is to be understood, which sounds or speaks *this* the knocking or collision of the lips."

Enquiry into the constitution of the primitive church, part II. page 11, 12.

style of Moses and the prophets from Christian assemblies, is a very awful attempt. It is no less daring to exclude the psalms of David, or any part of them from the worship of God. The practice of the apostles in applying many passages in the psalms to the times in which they lived, in expressing many gospel truths in Old Testament style, and the book of the revelation being almost entirely written in it, are all censured by this objection; but with a triumphant evidence they rise in proof of its absurdity.

Object 3 'There are so many passages in the psalms of David which are only applicable to himself; that hence it is necessary we should have other compositions more suitable to ourselves in New Testament times.'

Ans^r Some things already advanced might serve for a reply to this cavil*: But we shall offer our thoughts more fully on this point. If it had any force, it would be as much against the Jewish church using David's psalms as the Christian; because the same impropriety attended the one, which is said to take place in the other. In an accommodated sense, the Jews as well as we could only sing such passages as related to David as the Lord's anointed. Here let us condescend on some of these passages and shew the improvement we ought to make of them. He saith, 'When I shall receive the congregation, I shall judge uprightly,' Psal. lxxv. 2. 'God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth, Gilead is mine, Ephraim also is the strength of my head, Judah is my lawgiver,' Psal. lx. 6,--8. Our advocates for new psalms produce these and such like passages, with a certain air of triumph, to shew the absurdity of

* See the fifth observation on the second head,

of singing them. But let us speak a word in behalf of the Lord, who inserted these in the book of psalms, and directed them to the chief musician. If absurd in us to sing these, it is no less so to read them in God's worship, for reasons already given. As to the first passage, which relates to David's purpose of ruling with uprightness, when he acceded to the throne of Israel; We observe, that if there is one person in the worshipping assembly who has a prospect of filling up an important station in church or state, as that these words would be suitable for him, then we ought heartily to join with him in praise, as well as in prayer, and the improvement that all of us are bound to make of this passage is, that in the strength of divine grace we make holy resolutions to fill up our respective stations with the greatest integrity. As to the other passage relating the psalmist's anticipation of his swaying the sceptre over the dominions of Israel, a wise improvement may be made of it also. In singing it we should express strong acts of faith in God's promise, whatever difficulties are in the way of its accomplishment. David had the promise of God to depend on, for his being promoted to the government of Israel, but he had his way thro' difficulties, and yet we find him giving his heart vent in the language of exultation: So we have the promise of eternal life to depend on, should firmly believe the performance. One observes on this psalm, "That in singing it we may have an eye to the acts of the church, and to the state of our own souls, both which have their struggles *." Such wire-drawing critics as have taken this objection, might also tell us with some effrontery that in the Old Testament so much is said about Israel and Judah, and in the New Testament, concerning the disciples, the

Scribes

* Henry in loco

Scribes and Pharisees, yea in both so much said about persons and places as we have little concern in, that therefore all such passages in our Bible should be altered, being unfit for being read in God's worship. All persons who will allow a moment's reflection with seriousness on this subject, must see such modern refinements are only an artful scheme to weaken the authority of scripture, altogether. But every Christian who has taken God's word for the 'men of his counsellors' well knows, that God continues to speak to him, in what he said to his church, both in the Old and New Testaments, and the Spirit will lead to make a wise improvement of it*.

Finally

* "Object David's psalms do not suit our conditions: must we tell God it is so with us as it was with David, when possibly it is not so?

"Answ. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, reproof correction, instruction, &c. 2 Tim. iii. 16 and written for our learning and comfort, Rom. 15. 4. The psalms therefore are so. What passage is there in the psalms but we may some way accomodate to ourselves? Suppose David says, I am not puffed up in mind, Psal. cxxxi. and if you find your heart prone to pride, why here is a word then of admonition to you: So that while we are reciting and declaring David's humble frame and condition, we ought to lift up our hearts to God: that he would work the like frame in us: Lord, thy servant David could truly say, I am not puffed up in mind; Good Lord grant me this grace, also. Suppose we cannot find in ourselves such a love to God's law, as was in David, Psal. cxix. 97. &c. then there is a word of instruction to us, teaching us what we should do:

* Finally, This objection includes the cavils of some enthusiasts who dispute the lawfulness of singing psalms altogether. These alledge that David's psalms contain such strong expressions of faith, as profane persons by singing his words, utter abominable lies before God. But this, like most of the other objections, equally militates against the Jewish church making use of these expressions; surely we may sing 'the words of David' and of Asaph the seer, as well as they did in Hezekiah's

"do: we ought to pray to have such a divine affection
 "kindled in us to the law of God So that we sing psalms
 "as we read them for the benefit and good use we make
 "of them It is therefore no more a lie to sing them
 "than to read them; by both we recite what God has
 "revealed in his word for our admonition and instruc-
 "tion, &c. And though we cannot make all passages in
 "them our own, by using them for ourselves, and in
 "our own name, as David did yet we may make them
 "our own, by a sweet meditation on them, for our be-
 "nefit and edification." Squire Disney's portion
 of God's people, vol. II. page 704, 705.

"It a mixed multitude may join together in prayer,
 "and particularly if the psalms of David may be read
 "in the public congregation; tho' perhaps there are
 "many present who do not understand the meaning of
 "every phrase used therein: yet it does not follow that
 "because we do not fully understand the psalms of Da-
 "vid, therefore they ought not to be sung by us We
 "have before observed, that there is no essential diffe-
 "rence especially as to what concerns the frame of our
 "spirit, between singing and reading: therefore it fol-
 "lows that whatever psalm may be read may be sung:
 "He that is not qualified for the latter, is not qualified
 "for

kiah's days. The Levites and others who joined in singing, could no more apply every expression to themselves, than many in our assemblies. The joyful or sad condition of others, may be matter of song to us; and the mercies of God to his church formerly, should be viewed in some respects as bestowed on ourselves, being members of the same body. In this sense the Psalmist saith, 'He turned the sea into dry land, they went through the flood on foot; there did we rejoice in him,' Psal. lxi. 6. The invention of man seems to be racked to find objections against singing the psalms of the Spirit's enditing *.

Object. 4. 'Preaching and prayer are performed in New Testament language; and therefore we ought to praise God in this also: For when we use Old Testament words in our praises we must affix New Testament ideas to them, and thus we sing not the sense of the psalms, but something very different. Answ.

"for the former. The apostle indeed speaks of his praying and singing with the Spirit, as well as with the understanding; but the meaning of that is, that we ought to desire the efficacious influences of the Spirit, and press after the meaning of the words we use, either in praying or singing; yet the defect of our understanding, or having a less degree thereof than others, or than we ought to have, does not exempt us from a right to engage in this ordinance. Therefore we are not to refuse to join with those in singing the praises of God, whom we would not exclude from our society, if we were reading any of the psalms of David in public."

Ridgley's body of divinity, pages 571, 572.

* See a judicious answer to cavils of this kind, in Brown's 'Quakerism the path way to Paganism, being a satisfactory answer to Barclay's 'apology,' page 463 --- 465.

Answ. In preaching and praying we use Old Testament as well as New Testament language, and are bound by the authority of God to do so as often as the edification of his people requires it. Therefore there is no impropriety in singing praises to God in Old Testament words. But we affix New Testament ideas to them. This is a great error in the eyes of our objectors. Certainly a little attention to this point will dispel that darkness in which some mean to involve it. Wherefore let it be observed, that we ought to take in both Old and New Testament ideas, in reading the scriptures of the Old Testament, which have innumerable references to the Christian economy; and this ought to be done with the same propriety in singing the inspired songs of David. It is far from being true, that hereby we do not sing the sense of a psalm by affixing both kinds of ideas to it as the nature of it requires, for we rather sing the full that was intended by the Spirit of God, whereas otherwise we sing a part of the sense only. That we must have ideas in some respects different from the primary meaning of scripture, is evident from our reading the prophecies concerning the life, death, and glorification of Jesus Christ; we must carry in our minds the ideas of these now being accomplished, which the Old Testament saints could not, at the time they were revealed. ' These
 ' all died in the faith, not having received the promises;
 ' but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of
 ' them, and embraced them, Heb. xi. 13. In reading the messages which God sent by his prophets to his ancient people, we cannot have the idea of his now addressing them but ourselves in these. Yea, in reading the New Testament we must have different ideas from those, whom many passages in it, did primarily respect. Surely in reading Christ's predictions concerning his own death, the treachery of Judas and the destruction of

of Jerusalem, we must conceive of these being now past and not future events. And in reading the epistles we must have different ideas from those, to whom they were at first addressed. It will not necessarily follow, that thereby we mistake the genuine meaning of the scriptures, but rather that we read them in the manner which the Spirit of God intended; and that by affixing New Testament ideas to David's psalms, we sing them in their true sense and in their full latitude.

Object. 5. 'As we have forms both of sermons and prayers, recorded in scripture yet we do not confine ourselves to them in preaching or praying; neither ought we in our praises to confine ourselves to the book of psalms.'

Ans. It is in vain to argue from the reasonableness of a thing, when the will of God revealed in his word does not authorise it. We have no command nor example in the New Testament to make new psalms, as has been already shown. But we have abundance of passages in scripture to warrant the preaching of the word, and praying to God without a form: and no ground to believe that the prayers and sermons recorded in scripture were used as such. We have no promise of the Spirit to assist us in making new psalms, or in altering these already made; but we have the promise of divine assistance in preaching the gospel. 'Go ye therefore and teach all nations,--and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,' Matth. xxviii. 19, 20, we have also the promise of the Spirit to enable us to pray: 'And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication,' Zec. xii 10. Moreover, there cannot be a parallel run between preaching or praying, and praising; because this cannot be performed without a form, but those may, in regard one
F person

person only is the speaker. The Spirit of God has not left upon record such a large collection of sermons and prayers as of psalms, nor are they so well adapted to every case; therefore, we may easily see that this is only a mere cavil. There cannot be singing without a form, except all were enabled to compose at the same time, by having the same thoughts, and expressing the same words. Therefore, it now follows, that either there must be no singing at all, or it must be done by a form and if by a form, none is equal to that which the Spirit of God has entitled: His words and phrases in expressing divine things are the most fit and emphatical. And we may rejoice that we can sing the praise of God, not in 'the words which man's wisdom teacheth,' but in them which are far more excellent, even these 'which the Holy Ghost teacheth.'

Object. 6. 'To confine the New Testament church in her praises to the psalms of David is tyrannical, and the same with imposing Liturgies and Homilies on the church.'

Ans. It is exceeding strange that the authority of God, in requiring his church to abide by his ordinances and to offer these praises which are of the Spirit's enditing, should be reckoned tyrannical. It was owing to the amazing love of God to his church, that ever the book of psalms was composed, and delivered to her, as part of the canon of scripture. Tho' it belongs not to us, in the management of this subject to enter on the head of imposing Liturgies and Homilies on the church of Christ, yet we must observe, that it is very shocking to hear the psalms of David compared with these, which are only of human composition. We are persuaded that many who profess the episcopal religion, and make use of the Liturgy and Homilies, yet by no means will they exalt them to an equality with the psalms

'psalms of David.' To be tyed down to the word and ordinances of Christ, is opposition to the doctrines and inventions of men, should not be deemed a heavy burden: Christ's yoke is easy and his burden is light.' Mat. xi. 30. But we rather think that to impose on the church of Christ, the many hymns, spiritual songs, and anthems which are of human composition, is wreathing a yoke of bondage about her neck, and laying a burden upon her which he has not commanded. He saith to the church of Thyatira, 'I will put upon you none other burden: But that which ye have already hold fast till I come,' Rev. ii. 24. 25. Such is the depravity of human nature, that men put themselves to the greatest trouble in following their own modes and opinions, rather than submit to the ordinances of divine appointment. And we find a far greater keenness for these, than zeal for such ordinances of Christ, as they are in the possession of. It is long since some counted it a piece of tyranny, to be obliged to adhere to the doctrine of the scriptures, as exhibited in our Confession of Faith, Catechisms larger and shorter, directory of public worship, and propositions concerning church government, and now the notions of tyranny are screwed so high, as that it is reckoned an infringement on Christian liberty to be confined to the psalms of the Spirit's enditing in our praises.— May it not be also counted tyranny to tie people down to the scriptures of truth, as the alone rule of faith and obedience? But we suppose by this time we have tired your patience, and as the other objections against singing the psalms of David in gospel worship are so very trifling, we shall pass them by unnoticed, and shut up this discourse with a few exhortations.

First, Let us all be exhorted to bless God for putting us in the possession of a compleat system of gospel

ordinances, in their scriptural purity. The ordinances which are dispensed amongst us, bear evident marks of their divine appointment, and have been handed down to us, at the expence of much blood and treasure †. — Gospel ordinances are the greatest blessing which God bestows on a people. ‘ He shewed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation,’ Psal. cxlvii. 19, 20. We cannot be enough thankful for our privileges; and instead of pouring contempt on praising God in the words of David, let our hearts exult for joy, that ever they, with other parts of scripture, were made known to us. It is owing to the distinguishing goodness of God, that we are not covered with Pagan darknesses, Popish superstition, or Meho-metan delusion. O how little do we prize our privileges! Without the light of the sun, we could not discern the beauty of the creation; so without the light of the divine revelation, we would not have seen the ‘ chief of the ways of God,’ even the glorious work of man’s redemption by Jesus Christ. ‘ Through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us. To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace,’ Luke i. 78, 79.

Secondly, Let us be exhorted to hold fast every part of these ordinances. This is a day of great darkness in the church of Christ, and therefore the danger of their being corrupted is the greater: for when people lose views of the spirituality of God’s institutions, they are apt to begin to please their fancies. To hold fast the institutions

† From the year 1660, to 1688, no less than 1800 persons suffered martyrdom for adhering to the covenanted principles of the church of Scotland.

institutions of Christ, and transmit them in purity to posterity, are duties incumbent on every generation of religious professors; and to hold fast the scripture psalms, and hand these down to the rising generation, are herein included. 'We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come, the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children,' Psalm. lxxviii 4. 5. The vigorous struggles of our religious ancestors to maintain the whole system of divine truth in purity, will greatly aggravate our sin in letting any of Christ's truths slip. 'Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.' 2 Pet. iii. 17.

Thirdly Let us be exhorted to beware of counting any of Christ's ordinances as little matters. God will honour them who make a bold stand for what is counted little. 'And he said unto him, Well thou good servant; because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities,' Luke xix 17.--- Every step of degeneracy in a church appears at first as a little matter †. A grave divine compares these evils in

† 'Well, if they be none of Christ's small things let them go, but if they be one of his truths, will ye call that a small thing? His small things are great things. It might be proven to you, that there never was a controversy since the beginning of the world, even touching the most momentous truths, that was not accounted a small thing while it was occasion of trial.'

Livingston's sermon in the appendix to his life.

in their first beginnings to the point of a needle, which however small, has a long thread after it; so these draw a train of dismal consequences after them. Innovations in the church at first, wear something of an innocent and attractive aspect and the direful consequences are seldom adverted to, but by a few. What some observe of horse hairs lying nine days under water, that they then quicken and turn living creatures, may exemplify the consequences of lesser matters being allowed in religion, without a divine warrant. Indeed it seems to be a new religion which some are taken up with; — a religion which cansteth people to treat the principles solemnly espoused by the reformation, as matters of indifference or rather filleth them with enmity against them altogether. — A new religion must have new modes of worship, as hence it is that the psalms of David which have been sung in the churches of Christ, with so much heavenly delight, are now reckoned by many as quite improper for gospel worship. When a people depart from God, and despise the methods he takes to reclaim them, he is provoked to 'choose their devices' (Is. xvi. 4).

Fourthly. Let us who are ministers 'of the word of Christ' be counselled to make a bold stand for every part of divine truth. Our ordination vows bind us in the exercise of our ministry, to be 'valiant for the truth, 'on the earth.' Let us hear with solemn attention the charge given to Timothy, 'I give thee charge in the 'sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before 'Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good 'confession; That thou keep this commandment, without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of the 'Lord Jesus Christ,' 1 Tim. vi. 13, 14. Let us show our love to our glorious master, by endeavouring to keep up

up the credit of all the part of his word, in regard there are so many subtle schemes now on foot, to weaken its divine authority. In a particular manner, let us be careful to explain the meaning, and shew the propriety of 'the psalms of David;' and thus endeavour to prevent their falling into dispute among the people committed to our charge. So they read in the book in the 'law of the Lord God distinctly, and gave the song, and caused them to understand the reading,' Neh. viii. 8. Whatever trials we meet with in the exercise of our ministry, whether from open foes or professed friends, let us never think to forsake the banner of the Captain of our salvation, but rather resolve to 'endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ,' 2 Tim. ii. 3. Satan is unwearied in his attempts to bring the ministers of the gospel into contempt, because they are great enemies to the interests of his kingdom: He thus acts the part of the thief, who aims at killing the watchman, that with great ease and safety he may get into the house. To asperse the character of Ministers, and represent them as men who want by their sacred function only to exalt themselves above others, he ordinarily stirs up persons who have some reputation for holiness that by their influence they may raise a faction. These act as a live bird to bring others into the net. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram had in their company two hundred and fifty 'princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown. And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy every one of them, and the Lord is among them; wherefore then lift you up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord,' Numb. xvi. 1. 4.

Finally,

Finally. 'My brethren be strong in the Lord, and in
 ' the power of his might,' Eph. vi. 10. To prevent our
 ' making shipwreck of the faith and a good conscience let
 ' us daily implore the communications of divine grace.
 ' Now, unto him that is able to keep us from falling, and
 ' to present us faultless before the presence of his glory,
 ' with exceeding great joy. To the only wise God our
 ' Saviour, be glory, and majesty, dominion and power,
 both now and ever. Amen. Jude ver. 24, 25.



F I N I S