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AN
APOLOGY
FOR THE
BOOK OF PSALMS,

IN
FIVE LETTERS;

ADDRESSED TO

THE FRIENDS OF UNION IN THE CHURCH OF GOD.

Br GILBERT Mc MASTER, A. M. :

Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word.
Isaiab.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable.
Paul.

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the
commandments of men. *Messiah.*

BALLSTON-SPA :

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LETTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

Every power of man should be devoted to the service of God. Importance of Psalmody. Difference of opinion on the subject. Division of the church. Importance of union. Proposal of accommodation. Hopes of success. Mistakes corrected. Attention to the SUBJECT requested.

Dear Brethren,

EVERY subject which relates to the peace of the church, the institutions of God, or the exercise of the saint, must be interesting to you. Psalmody, in its matter and forms, has always claimed, and deservedly obtained, no small share of christian attention.

Every faculty of man should be consecrated to the service of his Creator. In the promotion of the divine glory, and in the advancement of personal holiness, all the principles of our nature, by a mutual influence, ought to co-operate. Man's powers of intellect, the sensibilities of his heart, and the capacity of expressing these sensibilities in appropriate strains of melody, are laid in requisition by our holy religion. Psalmody, employed in the

spirit of its institution, is peculiarly calculated to engage the heart, and to call forth an elevated devotion. In no other act of social religion, is an opportunity afforded for so much unanimity, in actual and congregated expression of devout sentiment; and, it is more than probable, no other part of instituted worship is so well adapted to interweave sentiment with every fibre of the heart of man.

"There is in souls a sympathy with sounds;
Some chord in unison with what we hear
Is touch'd within us, and the heart replies,"*

Who has not felt the melting influence of the soft strains of well conducted music? And how powerfully the martial band operates, by inspiring with courage, is well known to the warrior in the day of battle. When sentiment is accompanied with the fascination of music, it requires no common effort, even when the principle is disavowed, to break the charm.† This suggests to us the importance of proper matter for the psalmody of the church of God; it urges the necessity of circumspection, to guard against the introduction of incorrect

* Cowper.

† Let me, said Judge Hale, be ballad maker for a nation, and I care not who are legislators.

sentiment, or of crude and superficial opinions, in the sacred songs we employ. How often error is thus introduced into the mind of man, and blasphemy shed before the throne of the Eternal, need not now be told.

The celebration of God's praise, in suitable songs, is one of his own institutions. It is his appointment that his people *come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms*. Hear a new testament injunction: *Is any merry? let him sing psalms*. The practice was exemplified by two illustrious heralds of the cross, Paul and Silas; and that in circumstances very unfavorable to the exercise: it was at midnight, and when confined in the dungeon, at Philippi. In his own practice, our Redeemer himself gave his sanction to the social singing of praise, as an ordinance divinely appointed. After the institution of the *eucharistic* feast, he and his disciples *sung an hymn*: one of those comprised in the *hillel*, that is, those psalms from the hundred and thirteenth to the hundred and eighteenth inclusive.

This part of our worship is confessedly important. Its importance is manifested by the

time devoted to it in our solemn assemblies ; by the disputes agitated respecting it, in several sections of the church ; and by the care which God has taken, to furnish his worshippers with a system of songs ; songs indited by his Spirit, and remarkably adapted to the condition of the subjects of his grace, in their progress through life. The present brief, and, it is hoped, candid investigation of the subject, is justified by these considerations, as well as by the fact, that opposing opinions respecting it, divide, at this day, in practice, not a few of the Savior's friends ; opinions and practices maintained, respecting this portion of our sacred services, constitute one of those numerous exciting causes, that have aroused into warring factions, so many branches of the church of God.

This state of things is not as it should be. The church of the Redeemer is *really* one : That she is not *visibly* one, is the sin as well as the affliction of her members. No just cause of division or separation, in this holy corporation, should receive the countenance of any friend of God, or advocate of Zion's peace. No practice, no maxim, calculated to wound

the sensibilities of the meanest among the children of grace, unless enforced by divine authority, should be indulged ; for to wound the sensibilities, is to alienate the heart, and, if not to affect the conscience, certainly to enlist the passions. The natural result of irritated passions, is separation ; and a state of hostility.

Practices long indulged become familiar, and, in their associations, not unfrequently venerable. In religion, habit often connects its expedient forms with its divinely appointed institutions, and, except the mind be more than usually versed in the science of abstraction, a change in the one, is not unlikely to lead to an infringement of the other. He understands but little of the constitution of man, or but slightly regards the interests of society, who, with the wanton hand of rashness, would expunge the convenient institutes, which have long given body to opinion, and order to practice. The friend of peace, and the patron of order, will, therefore, treat with delicacy those forms that are recommended by ancient usage. A departure from this course can only be justified by a full and well founded conviction, that such forms are either essentially wrong,

or, from certain circumstances, pernicious in their effects. This caution must still be greater, when we go beyond forms to the substantials of religion ; to the matter of that worship which God himself has ordained to be offered before his throne.

In the psalmody of the church, there is, indeed, as in other social institutions, convenient forms, in which, according to circumstances, a variety may be innocently practised ; but there is also something in it of positive, divine appointment, with which no man may interfere. The matter must be evangelical. In this we must hearken attentively to the voice of the Lord ; and take heed lest our fear toward him be *taught by the precepts of men*.—Our spiritual song must be that which God approves. That good men entertain different sentiments, as respects the application of the general truth now stated, is readily admitted. One believes he may, with divine approbation, in public worship, employ the effusions of the pious muse, which are marked by no special disconformity to the sacred oracles ; another feels his conscience bound, exclusively, to the use of those songs, which God has given by

the inspiration of his Spirit ; which his church has used ; and which he believes was designed for the saints in the public, social worship of the church. These songs are found in the pages of the book of God.

It is not now intended to discuss the merits of this question. My object in this letter is to find a point where the jarring parties may meet in concord ; where they may ungird their armor ; forget their animosities ; and unite, for a while, in a song of praise to God their Savior. In this age of bible triumphs, and catholic liberality, I cannot think the desired point is difficult to be found. May not both parties meet, in the use of those songs, indited under the inspiration of God ? In the use of those songs, presented in the most correct version to be found, could any complain of inroads on the tenderness of conscience, or the purity of worship ? No. Methinks I hear both with ecstasy exclaim : " In the use of these songs we can cordially unite. They are the words of God ; and they are sweet to our taste."

But is this response an illusion of fancy, or is it a reality ? I trust it is the deliberate and

practical sentiment of every friend of the book of God. Acting upon it, in the present instance, would be attended by the happiest consequences. The more that christians are conversant with these songs, the more their fulness will be seen ; and the more familiar they become with their matter, its adaptation to the purposes of sacred praise will more obviously appear. Why then rend in pieces the body of Christ ? Is not the propriety of the contrary practice, the use of hymns of human composition, doubted by numbers who are seriously devout ? Is it not opposed, by not a few, in different ecclesiastical connexions, who, in talent, information, and fidelity, are not inferior to the chief of those from whom they differ ? Is there, by such a measure, any end to be gained, of sufficient value, to counterbalance the loss of one bond of union in the family of Christ ? Let this be seriously pondered.

But granting for a moment that the admission of hymns of human structure, instead of inspired songs, is, in itself, allowable, this inquiry, and it is an important one, offers itself to our minds : *Is it expedient ?* Let us attend

to the language of Paul: *Take heed, lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak. When ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.* He loves his body. Its humblest members he regards with kind affection. *He that toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye.*

As friends of Zion's peace I address you on this subject. And, again, I repeat the question: Why, in a matter of doubtful disputation, to say the least of it, rend the church of Christ? Consider, ye friends of godliness, the great importance of union in the household of faith. Seriously reflect on the fearful consequences of disunion among those who love the Lord, and who ought, with cordiality to love one another. To effect this harmony, the Father of mercies purposed to shed abroad his love in his people's hearts; to accomplish it, the Son of God humbled himself, and became obedient unto death; to unite those living stones that compose the building of mercy, he shed his precious blood; to effect the same end, he appears, as our intercessor, within the vail; his prayer, then, as formerly on

earth, is, that those who are given him *may be one*. In answer to his intercessory prayer, and in pursuance of the same design of grace, the Holy Ghost descends into his church.— The whole tendency of his operation is, to bring the subjects of his grace into *one*; not only as regards their connexion with Jesus, as their living head; but also as respects their principles, dispositions, hopes and practice.

Among the professed disciples of the Redeemer, diversity of views, and difference of practice do indeed prevail; but let each of them be assured, that no just ground of these proceeds from the Spirit of God. So far as they are actuated by him, the disciples of Christ, in sentiments and pursuits, are the same. He, though acting in different subjects, and under different circumstances, is never at variance with himself. This fact, taken in connexion with existing animosities, among the avowed friends of religion, affords no flattering assurance to the present age, of a great measure of the Spirit's influence being enjoyed. I am, indeed, aware that there is much talk of union; that schemes are devised, no doubt with the best designs, for its extension;

and you likewise know, that there is really very little of it in the church. That there should be more is readily confessed. That means more efficient for its attainment must be employed, all but the most superficial thinkers do admit. Too much, we have reason to fear, is attempted on this subject by one effort, and that one not well directed. Under the influence of a thoughtless impulse, early opinions, ancient prejudices, and confirmed habits, may, for a moment, be forgotten; but that impulse once gone, that moment past, they will return in all their wonted force. So far as contending parties unite on principle, and for an unprincipled union, no man of enlightened piety will plead, it must be effected by deliberation, and a precise inspection of the ground on which they meet.

Is it not, then, worth while to inquire, how far the subject of psalmody, at this day, in our country, tends to divide *the Church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood*? And to whatever extent it may produce an effect so unhappy, should not the most effectual remedy be speedily applied? Let none say, that this is only one point, in which some sec-

tions of the great community of christians disagree. Though it be but one point, it is a very important one. And is not a single point of union, fairly gained, of much consequence? The more numerous the points of contact, in principle, and in practice, the more strong is the spiritual edifice of the house of God. The man who has observed with attention the progress of religious contentions, knows well, that discord, in a single article, tends to alienate the minds of the parties at issue, more, upon others, than would otherwise be the case. And he knows but little of the principles of the human mind, who needs to be informed, that concession in one point at issue, prepares to mitigate the demands in others that are litigated. Should not, as far as proper, in this case, the experiment be made? Should it succeed, how noble would be the triumph over the unaccommodating, and arrogant spirit of party! more worthy of memorial, than those victories that are recorded in the blood of thousands. *He that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city.*

Admit, for a moment, that it is a narrow prejudice which makes some more than hesi-

tate to use, in solemn acts of worship, a hymn of human composure ; still it must be granted, that their preference of a scripture song, is not marked by what deserves the name of crime. It corrupts no ordinance of God. You, indeed, may not perceive any just cause for our scrupulosity ; but you can have no objection to join in our devotions. We have, however, objections against uniting in yours ; objections which a high handed practice is not calculated to obviate, in a manner which reflecting christians can approve.

In moments of devout reflection, the man of piety will approve of that course, which, on proper ground, most effectually tends to unite the followers of the Lamb. Whatever, in his conduct, has a contrary tendency, will, one day, call up the bitterest regret.—Why, then, in the use of a freedom, if such it be, certainly not necessary to your spiritual growth, banish from our solemn assemblies, any who loves the Redeemer's name ? Or, if there, why impose on him the hard alternative, of wounding his own mind, or of keeping silence, in this interesting part of social devotion. This would be, with a witness, to

destroy the harmony of Zion. Rather let us endeavor to *keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.** If the exclusion of modern hymns, and the restoration of inspired song, be the price of union, among any of the friends of the Redeemer, let that price without delay be given. I plead for this, as one important step toward a permanent accommodation of differences, among the christians of our country.

Will you, then, *can* you, ye friends of concord, refuse this? While in the name of God you plead for union, while you adduce from the gospel page, and urge with an eloquence, almost more than human, those holy motives, so well adapted to soothe to repose every turbulent emotion of the mind, and to enlist all the better affections of the heart upon your side, *dare* you, with all these accents of peace on your lips, refuse this offer? Will you, in place thereof, professedly light a torch at the sacred fire of the altar of God, and, carrying it

* **ERN. 4. 3.** Is not this scripture frequently misunderstood and incorrectly applied? *Unity and peace* are chimed over without regarding their characteristics. "By the *unity of the spirit*, we are to understand not only a spiritual unity, but also a unity of sentiments, desires, and affections, such as is worthy of, and springs from the Spirit of God." *Clarke.*

Union in falsehoods and contradictions, is not intended by the apostle.

in your hand, kindle in his temple a destructive flame? will you kindle a flame, which consumes the bonds of peace, of love, and all that is cheering to the heart, leaving to the view the cheerless prospect of desolations? For, when angry passions take the place of holy zeal, confusion that of order, or form that of life, *ИХ-АБОД, the glory is departed*, may be inscribed on the doors of our sanctuaries. That an unaccommodating spirit, productive of such consequences, prevails at this day, I cannot easily persuade myself to believe. I shall therefore continue to hope, that no measure consistent with the purity and order of the church, shall be left untried, to accelerate among her sons, a happy unanimity. A brief review of opinions and practices, ancient and modern, on the subject of psalmody, may be interesting to some, and, it is believed, will be subservient to the proposed end, uniformity in this part of sacred worship, and an approximation towards that oneness, so desirable in the church of God.

This oneness, it is too well known, cannot now be found. In purity, in consistency, in firmness, and in elevation of character, the churches, generally, for more than a hundred and fifty

years past, have been losing ground. To be more than convinced of this unpleasant fact, the mind has only to glance at their history. They are broken into fragments. And even in those sections that profess union, the cohesive principle acts with a feeble influence on their constituent parts. Their principles, their forms and matter of worship, are discordant. This is remarkably the case, in that interesting service, which, of all others on earth, most resembles the employment of those perfect spirits who, in unison, strike the harp of glory before the throne of God. Cast your eyes over the several churches; listen to their song: It is the confusion of Babel. What thoughtful christian has not felt and deplored this evil? Amidst all this accumulation of modern hymns, under which our presses and our shelves are groaning, and the public mind confounded, no rallying point can be found, where the redeemed of the Lord may unite in public praise.—But the thought is painful; let it, at present, be no further pursued.

It is, nevertheless, a cheering reflection that the articles of faith, on which the sections of the spiritual empire of our Lord, most remote

from each other, agree, are very numerous and very important; and in the prosperity of that empire of which they are *fellow citizens*, they have a common interest. That there are jarring views among them, on a few *important* points, is matter of poignant sorrow; for, in their number, there is no mind so perverted, as to rejoice in the divisions of Zion; no heart so hard, as not to relent at the signs of alienated affections among her sons. Defective in duty is he also esteemed, who, in his proper place, attempts not to heal those wounds, and to harmonize those affections. Success in such an undertaking is not hopeless. These relents, these numerous and important points of agreement, the common interest of saints in the progress of *truth and peace*, give assurance of an ultimate triumph.

Let not, then, the infidel rejoice in our unhappy discords. He and his companions, too, have their wars; and they maintain them without a heart. The sons of Zion are friends to truth; children of the same family, they touch with freedom each others mistakes, they reprove with an affectionate heart, and love as brethren still. They well understand the worth

of that compliment, which is couched under a manly appeal to consistency on a point at issue. Differences can never be removed unless they occupy a share of thought, and find a place in free and meek discussion. Discussion, to rise above chicanery, must be plain ; to be useful, it must be meek. The result of an opinion is not always seen by its advocate, and when disavowed, though it belong to his system, should not be imputed to the man. And, for that liberality, which, under the shield of venerated names, would save from exposure, sentiments or practices of evil tendency, I know you are not the advocates.

Regardless, then, of the charge of *bigotry*, a vulgar term, ill defined, and successively applied to all on this side the mansions of absolute skepticism, and from which I shall be freed by your award ; as well as from the imputation of violating the laws of charity, a lovely term and lovelier grace, a term, however, which, from lack of knowledge of its import, is often pressed into many an unholy service, uncongenial with its nature, I proceed in my discussion, after adverting to an idea, a mistaken idea indeed, but one which in some

circles is used, with some address, and not without effect. It is this; that the regard shown to the subject advocated in these sheets, is a prejudice, originating in foreign attachments, and is fostered by *transatlantic* partialities. You, brethren, know this to be a mistake, and through you it may be well to correct it.

To say, indeed, that you and I do not cherish, with kind respect, the memory of the Calvin's and the Bezas, of the Luthers and the Melancthons, of continental Europe, would betray ungrateful affectation. To disavow a veneration for the Wickliffes, the Knoxes, Buchannans, Wishearts, Cranmers, Rutherfords, Renwicks, and Owens of Great Britain, would be to falsify some of the best affections of our hearts. And as long as the union of pre-eminent talent with piety of the first order, shall be venerable in the estimate of man, so long shall homage be rendered to the Westminster divines, their memory be kindly cherished and their labors duly prized. And, notwithstanding, the slander and the infamy, which an ungracious policy has attached to the Emerald Isle, our hearts refuse to disregard the memo-

ry and the works of her Ushers, and her Boyles, her Berkleys, her Lelands and Magees. But still we demand credit for our tenderest affections being *cisatlantic*; and certainly, so far as we have national partiality, it is of American growth. While we would duly estimate foreign genius, literature, and piety, and give them credit for our drafts upon their stores, it is not with less heart that we recognize the luminaries of America. 'It is with a just pride we can boast our Mathers and our Edwardses, with a constellation of others, whose beams not only dissipate the gloom of our wilderness, but add to the splendor of European light: Yet still our faith, and our devotions must not be subjected to any, nor to all of these; before the authority of heaven, and of that alone, in matters of religion, are we permitted to bow.

But after all, it is hard to see how the preference of Psalms, given by the inspiration of God, to the productions of an English poet, can be, even *apparently*, placed to the account of foreign partiality. Let the idea of a local religion, whether European or American be far from our minds. The religion of the Bible is adapted to every province of God's em-

pire in this world. Instead, then, of *Americanizing* religion, as some idly talk, accommodating its substance and its forms, to every impulse of popular prejudice, let it be our care and our endeavor, in our respective departments, that the national character be stamped with the image of the lively oracles of the God of truth.

Trusting, brethren, that among ~~the~~ very numerous and greatly important objects which solicit your attention, and occupy your time, some interval of leisure and of seriousness will permit the subject of these letters to come before you; and when such a season shall occur, not to these letters, for that is not hoped, but to their *subject*, do I beg your respectful attention. And whatever may be the consequence of your inquiry, we know, that, on this point, no discrepant opinion shall be permitted to break in upon the charities of social life. Those charities we feel, and their exercise is enjoined by our blessed religion. This exercise, while we deplore sentiments of unhappy tendency, and condemn practices which we cannot approve, teaches us to admit the evidence of motives that mitigate their criminali-

ty, and to rejoice in the virtues that recommend the man.

LETTER II.

ANCIENT HISTORY OF PSALMODY.

Remarks. Character of the age of the Fathers. Eusebius's historical statements. True history of Psalmody in the early ages. Pliny. Tertullian. Jerome. Cyril. Augustine. Cassian. Chrysostom. Apostolic Constitutions. Remarks.

Dear Brethren,

WHEN engaged in the field of controversy, every weapon that seems to promise aid in bringing the contest to a successful issue, is grasped with eagerness by the contending parties. Hence, in matters of public dispute, the combatants are disposed to magnify the numbers that give countenance to their cause; forgetting that "the word of God is our all sufficient rule, and not the sentiments of any number of fallible men: so that in fact they have sometimes been found right, who have seemed not only to have *all the world, but almost all the church against them.*"*

* Dr. Scott.

In matters of dispute, the antiquity of an opinion or practice, is frequently deemed of weight in conducting to a proper decision.— The wisdom of ancient times must be revered. In the concerns of religion, there is, with some, a charm in antiquity not easily broken. With ancient usage we are prone to associate the infallibility of the apostolic age, and, gratuitously, deem the fathers of a distant time more pious, as well as better acquainted with the practice which was regulated by inspiration, than the men of modern days. I shall detract nothing from that reputation which the days of the Fathers can justly claim. It will, however, be found with many of the ancients, what is true of not a few of our modern friends : as our acquaintance advances, our veneration diminishes.

The truth is, fifty years, after the death of the apostles, had scarcely passed by, when the church they had planted with so much purity, and fostered with so much care, exhibited an aspect very different from what it did before. The historian Hegesippus, of the second century, pronounced the virgin purity of the church to have been confined to the apostolic age.— Jerome, of the fourth century, testifies, that

“the primitive churches were tainted with gross errors, even while the apostles were alive, and the Savior’s blood yet warm in Judea.” In the following periods the depravity increased ; their picture is drawn in dark colors. “There was no charity in works, no discipline in manners.” The practice of such periods can go but a little way, in settling controversies respecting divine institutions. For satisfaction, as to the appointments of God, we must rest, not on the practice of the Fathers, but on the dictates of inspired truth. Keeping this in recollectoin, it may, nevertheless, be interesting to ascertain their modes and matter of worship. And, as a pompous and, at first sight, imposing display of research into the ancient practice of the church, on the subject of Psalmody, has been made, by some of those, who treat with little decorum certain parts of the word of God, it may not be inexpedient to inquire, how far their représentation of that practice is entitled to our confidence.

The Rev’d Dr. *James Latta*, late of Chesnut Level, Pennsylvania, appeared as the chief champion, in the latter part of the last century, for a new system of sacred songs, and also

the most confident enemy of the scripture Psalms. Some copyists of the doctor, such as Messrs. *Freeman* and *Baird*, of inferior standing in the Presbyterian church, have since appeared in the same cause. As these lag behind their original, in every thing but in virulence against the inspired songs of Zion ; they shall now occupy but little of our time ; our attention shall chiefly be directed to the conclusions of Dr. Latta.

The results of his historical investigation may be reduced to two positions : First, that evangelical hymns, of human composition, constituted the *whole* matter of the Church's Psalmody for the first three centuries. And, secondly, That the Book of Psalms was not introduced into the Christian Church, as the matter of her praise, till error and heresy, to which it was subservient, boldly attempted, in the fourth century, to veil the divine glories of the Redeemer.*

But how does this author, and his successors in the same work, substantiate these positions ? The first historical proof is drawn from *Pliny's* letter to Trajan, in which the emperor

* Latta's Discourse, pp. 76—78. Ed. 4.

is informed, among other things, that the christians, assembled on a certain day, “sung a hymn to Christ as to God.”* Now, if not disposed to play upon mere words, would not every man of common sense perceive, that, if those christians sung the forty fifth psalm, they must literally have addressed Christ as God. Compare verses 1—9, with Heb. 1. 8. 9. and this will be evident—Or, had they sung a portion of the 102 psalm, would it not have been a song to Christ as to God? I do not know what our modern *hymnologists* would think of these; but certain I am, the Apostle Paul did believe them, as well as many others, to be odes to Christ. The reader of the first and second chapters of the epistle to the Hebrews will, too, be satisfied of this.† The only ground of quibble is on the term *hymn*, the

* PLINY, the younger, was born at Como in Italy, A. D. 62. He died A. D. 113. He was proconsul, in Bythinia, under Trajan the Roman emperor, and was for a time engaged in carrying into effect the imperial edicts against the christians. His correspondence on the subject, with the emperor, took place in A. D. 103. He is celebrated as a fine writer, and eloquent lawyer. His testimonial of the christian character, being that of an enemy, is worth a great deal.

† The fact is remarkable, that the apostle, in conducting his argument in favor of the personal glories and mediatorial exaltation of Messiah, against the false views of his countrymen, illustrates and confirms it by the authority of the Book of Psalms. In every ode of that sacred collection, to which he

usual version of *carmen*, which is the word used by Pliny. Now the veriest novice in the Latin language knows, that *carmen* is a word of general signification, applicable to any poetic, and even to prosaic composition.* This is the reasoning of these gentlemen : Pliny says, the christians of his day sung, or rehearsed, (*dicere*) a poetic composition to Christ, as to God; therefore they did not sing the scripture songs, but hymns of human composure ! What child, that has been taught to read the bible, and is instructed in the rudiments of christianity, would not reason better than such doctors ? He could say, if they sung the 45, 47, 68, &c. psalms, and why might they not have sung them ? they would have sung to Christ as to God. The christians of that age were not ignorant of this : *Irenæus*, who was instructed by a disciple of the apostle John, in

turned, he found the Son of God, the Savior of man, dispensing the blessings of his kingdom. If the Spirit of God taught an apostle to find his Redeemer there, by what spirit are they instructed, who say, he is not to be found in those Psalms, and their use is not honorable to his cause ; “ it deprives him of divine honor” || ? *Believe not every spirit.*

|| Latta's Disc. p. 77.

* *Carmen*—“ Any set form of words, whether in prose or verse, as, *Len horrendi carminis erat.* Liv. 1. 26. *Adam.*

proving the deity of Jesus Christ, urged the testimony of the forty fifth psalm.*

The doctor next has recourse to the deductions of Basnage from *Tertullian*,† who flourished in the second century. Let us hear the testimony of this father? It is this, that it was the practice, in certain companies, for individuals to be called forth in the midst of them, to praise God, in songs, either from the *scriptures*, or of their own composition. You will remark, that Tertullian is not speaking of the ordinary, united singing in the church, as a stated institution of God; but of a particular practice, in some places, attended to by individuals—*Quisque provocatur in medium*—Again, these individuals, according to their respective talent, drew their songs, either from the *sacred writings*, or their own resources—*De scripturis sanctis, vel proprio ingenio.*‡

* Milner.

† *Tertullian* flourished toward the close of the second, and beginning of the third centuries. He was a native of Carthage, educated a lawyer, and ultimately a distinguished presbyter. He was a man of distinguished talents, but of severe manners—inclined to superstition. He was the chief Latin writer of the second century, in the cause of christianity.

‡ Si honesta causa est convivii, reliquum ordinem disciplinæ ædificate qui sit, de religionis officio. Nihil vilitatis, nihil immodestię admittit. Non prius discumbitur, quam oratio ad Deum prægustetur. Editur quantum esurientes cupiunt: bibi-

Let us now see the spirit of this reasoning. Tertullian relates the practice of certain individuals, as allowed by some meetings for social entertainment; therefore, Tertullian relates an ordinance of God, for the stated and united worship of his people! for, if not stated public worship, it makes nothing for him. And, again, because those individuals, on those occasions, drew their songs, either from the *scriptures* or their own ingenuity; therefore, *scripture* songs were not then in use; but hymns of human composition *alone*! Such are the premises, and such are the conclusions.

He next introduces Origen, a contemporary of Tertullian, exhorting the people *to strive by their hymns, by their psalms, by their spiritual songs, that they might obtain the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" And then, in correspondence with his usual laws of logic, concludes, that *hymns of human composition* were used, in the Psalmody of the Church, in the days of that Father, to the exclusion of the

tur quantum pudicis est utiliter. Ita saturantur, ut qui meminerint etiam per noctem adorandum Deum sibi esse. Ita fabulantur, ut qui sciant Dominum audire post aquam manualet et lumina, ut quisque de scripturis sanctis vel de proprio ingenio potest, provocatur in medium Deo canere.—*Tertul. Apol., Opera. P. 32.*

book of psalms. This was Dr. Latta's hypothesis, and at all hazards he would argue for it. In this he is followed very closely by his copyists. Origen obviously alludes to the apostolic language, Col. 3. 16. Is it too much to demand of our friends who reason thus, some proof of the existence and public use, in the age of the apostles, of such hymns as they contend for? Of this, which should first be settled, it seems they never think.

When he meets with the fathers of the fourth century, he succeeds no better. Yet he writes without fear, and sets at defiance the legitimate laws of reasoning. He finds in EUSEBIUS, that hymns had been written at the beginning, in honor of Christ, and then very logically infers, that songs of human composition were *exclusively* used in the Church of God. It is an argument of the same character with the following: the friends of the reformation, in the sixteenth century, composed sacred songs in behalf of truth, which were privately read and sung, for the instruction of the people;* therefore the reformation churches, in their public worship, sung nothing but such

* M'Crie's Knox, p. 416.

compositions. This is bad reasoning, very bad to be sure, but it is the reasoning of Dr. Latta, Messrs. Freeman and Baird.

A similar argument, with no little parade, is drawn from the case of Paulus of Samosata, at Antioch. That heretic had abolished the use of the psalms which were sung there to the glory of Christ, whose Godhead he denied, and appointed hymns to be publicly sung in his own praise. For these impieties he was degraded from the sacred office. These are the naked facts; and what, think you, is the inference from them? That the church used, exclusively, hymns of human composition! But why pursue the subject? Such reasoning rises not to the dignity of a sophism. Such perversions of historical record, only tend to shake our confidence in human testimony. Should such reasoning be admitted, as legitimate, in our courts of justice, who would not tremble for the safety of his person and rights? For other reasons than the safety of their literary fame, it is trusted, that these productions of *Latta*, *Freeman*, and *Baird*, were the hasty effusions of the rashness of youth, and thought.

less driyellings of dotage, rather than the matured conclusions of manly minds.

But how do these writers succeed in establishing the position, that the book of psalms had no place in the public worship of the church, till under the influence of heresy, in the fourth century, it obtained an introduction? Read their pages. The only proof offered is, the assertion, that human composures, exclusively, were used ; and this assertion is supported by such reasoning as we have heard. If a begging of the question, followed up by confident assertion, and very loose declamation, be admitted as proof, then, but not otherwise, have they established the point. Let us now, very briefly, attend to a true and plain statement of facts on this subject.

Of the practice in the apostolic age there can be little doubt. The Savior, while yet with his disciples, set them an example from which they were not likely to depart—The *hallel* was sung by him and them. The proselytes from the house of Israel, usually constituted the nucleus of every church. This the *Acts of the Apostles* abundantly prove. These converts were peculiarly attached to their an-

cient forms, and to the sacred books which were so familiar to their minds. Had it been proposed, to exclude their inspired songs from their assemblies, and to substitute others of human device in their place, the whole church would have been convulsed. On this point, however, there was no dispute between the Jewish and the Gentile christian. The singing of the inspired songs of Zion constituted no part of the yoke of bondage. In the expressions of their holy joy, they were commanded to "sing psalms." The uniform silence on this subject, the calm in the church respecting it, is proof, that all united in the use of scripture songs. The appeals of the Son of God himself, to the book of psalms, in proof of his glory, was too recent to be forgotten—the very frequent appeals of his Apostles to these holy hymns, in exhibition of his character, too deeply impressed his church, to permit any dispute upon the point. It was not then known, that their use "flattened devotion—made worship dull—darkened the views of God the Savior, and tended to make heresy triumphant." No, no; the book of Psalms was then understood, and its power was felt

by the church. All that has ever appeared in opposition to this is idle rant; proving nothing, but that profound ignorance, or extreme disregard of the Bible system, governed the pens of the writers. If there were other than inspired songs used in the Psalmody of the Church, during that age, let some of them be produced, or indubitable evidence of their existence, be made appear. This has not yet been done.

With the first century the last of the apostles died. The church, in the second age, was less pure than in the former. What was her practice, as to psalmody, in the second century? She used songs of human composition, exclusively, say the patrons of innovation.—We have seen a sample of their proof. Let us, however, inquire for ourselves. Whatever was the apostolic practice, was most likely to be that of the orthodox, in the period of which we speak. Pliny's letter assures us, that psalmody was a part of stated public worship. His expression intimates, that their *mode* was that of the Jews—*dicere secum invicem*—to sing *alternately*. The remarks before made will lead us to see, that, if the Bythinian chris-

tians brought in the ancient *mode*, the ancient inspired *song* was much more likely to be retained. That song recognized *Christ as God*. Irenæus, after the example of Paul, defended the divinity of Jesus by the forty fifth Psalm. According to the same, and other examples no less high, he could have argued the same point from many more; that the songs, then, which they used, were those found in the book of God, is an assumption better supported, than the hypothesis of those who take the other side.

Tertullian intimates, that Psalmody was a part of the ordinary worship of the church in his day. He expressly mentions the fact, that in the African church, the 133 psalm was uniformly used, at the administration of the Lord's Supper. Nor does he compliment those who only used it at that solemnity.* It would be a novel mode of reasoning, to conclude from this, that none other of the psalms were sung at the sacramental solemnity, and no less arbitrary to assert, that none other of that sacred collection, was sung by the church. We, here,

* Hoc tū psallere non facile nosti, nisi quo tempore cum corporibus comas.
Tertul. de Jejun. Op 552.

have proof, that on the most solemn occasion of the church's service, the book of psalms was employed in the second century ; and why not on common occasions ? We have not proof that, in the stated worship of the church, any other collection was used, or divinely authorized. To assert it, is not to act the part of an enlightened instructor.

We now approach the third century. The state of the church was not better in this, than in the last age. The testimony of history furnishes little light on the practice of this period, as it respects psalmody. This is the less to be regretted, as we must, after all, have recourse to a more sure word of prophecy. Irenæus, Tertullian, and others, of the preceding century, flourished in the beginning of this. The practice of the last, for aught that appears to the contrary, was the practice of this.

Of the practice of the fourth century we know more. Its writers were more numerous, and more reputable, than those of the third.—*Jerome*, of Palestine, “ whose learned and zealous labors will hand down,” says *Mosheim*, “ his name with honor to the latest posterity,” informs us, that the thirty first, and forty fifth

psalms, were sung at the administration of the Lord's supper; as was the 133 psalm, in the second century, according to Tertullian. In this Jerome is supported by *Cyril*, of Jerusalem, his contemporary.* *Augustine*, who in talent and piety, was not surpassed by any in his age, testifies to the use of the book of Psalms, in the Psalmody of the church. It was used by himself in his own church; and, as a thing in course, on one occasion, he mentions the singing of the 65 psalm.† That this father, who was deeply versed in the experience of vital godliness, did not think that these songs tended, "to flatten devotion," appears from his Confessions. It is remarkable how those pathetic addresses are replenished with the language of the book of Psalms. With pleasure did he remember how, in early life, God taught him, by that unequalled system of experimental godliness which it unfolds. "I read," says he, "with pleasure the Psalms of David—The hymns and songs of thy church moved my soul intensely; thy truth was distilled by them into my heart; the flame of piety was kindled, and my tears flowed for joy."‡

* Catech.

† Serm. 10.

‡ Conf. B. 9.

These hymns and songs, as appears from the following book, were no other than those of the book of Psalms. He relates now, what took place at Milan, under the ministry of *Ambrose*, where he says—"This practice of singing had been of no long standing. It began about the year when Justina persecuted Ambrose."* It is to this *Mosheim* adverts, when he, incorrectly, states that David's Psalms were introduced *among* the hymns of the church.† Before this time there was no Psalmody in the west. Again, when Augustine speaks of the effects of sacred music, he owns "that the infirmity of nature may be assisted in devotion by Psalmody—When I remember my tears of affection, at my conversion under the melody of thy church, with which I am still affected, I acknowledge the utility of the custom." These Psalms he was prepared to vindicate against their revilers, as well as to use them in his church. "One Hilary," says he, "took every opportunity of loading with malicious censures the custom—that *hymns from the Book of Psalms*, should be sung at the altar. In obedience to the com-

* Milner. † Vol. I. 385.

mands of my brethren, I answered him."*—
 "The Donatists, too," a fiery sect of enthusiasts, "reproached the orthodox," as the same venerable father informs us,† "because they sung with sobriety the divine songs of the prophets, while they (the Donatists) inflamed their minds with the poetic effusions of human genius." His estimate of this book may be learned from the fact, that, in his last sickness, he had David's penitential Psalms inscribed upon the wall of his chamber.‡

Athanasius of Alexandria, the correct, bold, and suffering witness for orthodoxy, employed the Psalms of David in his church. For this we have the testimony of Augustine. When speaking of the abuse of sacred music, he adds,—
 "Sometimes I could wish all the *melody* of David's Psalms were removed from my ears and those of the church, and think it safer to imitate the plan of *Athanasius*, bishop of Alexandria, who directed a method of repeating the Psalms, more resembling pronunciation than music."||

That Ambrose used the book of Psalms is proved by the same testimony. He was, him-

* See Calv. Inst. B. 3, Chap 20. † Epist. 119. Tom. 2.

‡ Milner. || Conf. B. 10.

self, for a time, a member of the church in Milan. Thence it spread into all the churches of the west. "The people, says the historian, were much delighted, their zeal for the doctrine of the Trinity was inflamed," &c. The universality of the practice is evinced by the testimony of Jerome, already mentioned.— "You could not," he says, "go into the fields but you might hear the ploughman at his hallelujahs, and the vine dresser chanting the psalms of David."

In the apostolic constitutions* we learn that "the women, the children, and humblest mechanics, could repeat all the Psalms of David; they chanted them at home and abroad; they made them the exercises of their piety and the refreshment of their minds. Thus they had answers ready to oppose temptation, and were always prepared to pray to God, and to praise him, in any circumstance, *in a form of his own inditing.*"

* Lib 2. C. 57. The collection of regulations, known under the name of the "Apostolical Constitutions," made its appearance in the fourth century. Though we may justly dispute its Apostolical origin, it may be admitted of sufficient authority, as far as it indicates the customs of the third, and following century. We see its testimony respecting the use of the book of psalms.

The testimony of *Chrysostom*, the eloquent patriarch of Constantinople, who flourished in this age, is full in point. He was no enemy to the Godhead of Christ. He ranked high among the orthodox divines of his day. "All christians," says this first of sacred orators,* "all christians employ themselves in David's Psalms more frequently than in any other part of the old or *new testament*. The grace of the Holy Ghost hath so ordered it, that they should be recited and sung night and day. In the Church's vigils, the first, the midst, the last, are David's Psalms. In the morning David's Psalms are sought for; and David is the first, the midst, and the last. At funeral solemnities, the first, the midst, and the last, is David. *Many who know not a letter can say David's Psalms by heart*. In private houses where the virgins spin—in the monasteries—in the deserts, where men converse with God, the first, the midst, and the last is David. In the night, when men are asleep, he wakes them up to sing; and collecting the servants of God into angelic troops, turns earth into heaven; and of men makes angels, chanting David's Psalms."

* Hom. 6. on penitence.

Whatever may be the reputation of *Cassian*, as to literary attainments, his testimony, in matters of fact, is not liable to exception. He wrote in the fifth century. In vindicating the religious order, with which he was connected, he observes*—"the elders have not changed the ancient custom of singing *psalms*. The devotions are performed in the same order as formerly.—The *hymns* which it had been the custom to sing at the close of the night vigils, namely, the 50th, 62d, 89th, 148th &c. *psalms*, are the same *hymns* which are sung at this day." Could the singing of the book of *psalms*, had it been a novel practice, at that time, have been called an *ancient custom*?—Why conclude, when the term *hymn* is found in the writings of the Fathers, that a song of human inditing is intended, when we find that the *psalms of scripture*, are by them denominated *hymns*? But of this anon.

One word more respecting the introduction of the book of *psalms*, into the christian church. The author, whose *non sequiturs* fill so many pages, roundly asserts, that it had no place there, in the first three centuries; and, that, un-

* Lib. 3. C. 6.

der Arian influence, it was introduced and supported, in the fourth and following centuries. These round and unfounded assertions, are roundly contradicted by the testimony of Tertullian, of Jerome, of Cyril, of Augustine, of Chrysostom, of Cassian, and of the Apostolic constitutions. According to all of these, the songs of scripture, from the beginning, were employed in the psalmody of the church; nor does it appear, that, at any time, the Arians were the friends, either of their introduction, or of their continuance. That Paulus, at Antioch, had hymns sung in his own praise, is admitted; and, that, in other places, the orthodox and the Arians separated in singing the psalms, because the latter would have odes conformable to their heresy, is fully known. But as I am aware of no inspired psalm, that is conformable to the denial of the Saviour's deity, I presume they sought their hymns from some other source than the book of Psalms. Tell us, what inspired psalm was suitable to the praise of Paulus, and to the celebration of his heresy.

But were not the psalms of David first brought into use, in the christian church, by

Flavian and Diodore, at Antioch? So Dr. Latta and his coadjutors affirmed; but with the same disregard of authority, as is manifest in most of their other historical reports. The truth is, the manner of singing, and not the matter sung, is the subject of record, in respect of the church of Antioch, at that time. The notice of the matter of Psalmody is only incidental, but, on that account, not the less important.

Suidas,* on the word χορος, *chorus*, informs us, that "The choirs of Churches were in the time of Flavian, of Antioch, between A. D. 337 and 404, divided into parts, who sung the Psalms of David alternately: a practice which commenced at Antioch, and thence extended into all parts of the christian world." Observe, it was not the *singing* of David's Psalms that is then said to have commenced, but the *manner* of singing them. And Flavian; and Diodore, were not Arians, who, according to Dr. Latta and his friends, were the only patrons of the scripture Psalmody; but the orthodox opposers of Leontius, the Arian bishop of that city.† "These provisions, says

* Lexicon.

† Hooker carries up the practice of singing, *alte nately*, the

Bingham, were designed to restore and revive the *ancient Psalmody*, by reducing it to its primitive harmony and perfection.”* There is not the remotest intimation of any change, or innovation, as respected the matter of their sacred song.

The foregoing statements show, that the celebration of the praises of God, in the compositions of inspiration, obtained in Greece, Asia, and Africa, from the beginning—That it was uniformly, and universally practised, in the Churches in western Europe, is not so clear. On the authority of Augustine, Calvin† thinks that Psalmody was not general there before the time of Ambrose, bishop of Milan, who, under the persecution of the Arians, introduced it into that Church; whence it spread into others, in the regions of the west. This fact accounts, in a satisfactory manner, for the representation of Mosheim, and others, that, in this age, the Psalms of David were first introduced, as the matter of the Church’s song. In most of those Churches they had hitherto, from obvious causes, been generally destitute of this

Psalms of David, to the days of Ignatius the disciple and friend of the apostles. *Eccles. Polit.*

* *Antiq. of the Church.*

† *Instit. Lib. 3. Cap. 26.*

part of public worship. That was not an age of Bible Societies. Copies of the Scriptures were rare, and a Psalm Book not to be had. The defect was supplied, as the Bible was translated into the vernacular tongues.

The subject has, in all ages of the Church, claimed her attention, and, whatever unauthorized and restless, or vain individuals might effect, it never was the deliberate opinion of any, capable of consistent reflexion, that her songs should, without limitation, be the *spontaneous effusions* of heated affections. The decisions of the council of Laodicea, in A. D. 364, and the second at Braga, in Spain, early in the 7th century, prove the contrary. The former decreed, that no unauthorized psalms should be used in the church; the latter prohibited all, except those of divine inspiration. These facts, together with Augustine's reply to the revilings of Hilary, and the practice of the orthodox in his day, notwithstanding the reproaches of the raving Donatists, speak a language very different from that of the gentlemen, whose representations are now under review.

It, nevertheless, may be admitted, without injury to our cause, that, in those days of evil,

when clerical ambition, and ecclesiastical profligacy, appeared with such unblushing effrontery as they did, advantage was taken of the commotions of the times, to introduce, by every mean, the conflicting corruptions of doctrine, order, and worship. And it would be strange, if the united charms of poetry and music, were not laid in requisition to further their designs. I admit the probability of hymns of human composure being numerous ; and, that they were frequently used in public worship, we need not doubt. That many of them were intended to honor, and as many others both calculated, and intended, to dishonor the Redeemer of men, neither the opinions of the times, nor the character of the prime actors of those days, forbid us to suppose.

But, when all this is granted, I assert, without apprehension of any well supported contradiction, that there is no ground to believe, that inspired songs were not used, from the beginning in the church of God ; or, that uninspired hymns were *exclusively* adopted, or, at all, adopted, with divine approbation. It is a specimen of bad reasoning to conclude, that, because such hymns were admitted by worship-

ping assemblies, the admission was of divine institution.* Of no fairer character is the conclusion ; that the admission of these, proves the unfitness and rejection of David's inspired odes. He must also be hard pushed for an argument, who must conclude, that, because Arians opposed the psalms that were sung in honor of Christ, the orthodox did not retain those indited by the spirit of God ; as though these might not be the same. And I pray I may never make that candor and liberality my model, which more than intimates, that all who are opposed to the use of uninspired hymns, must be hostile to the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus. Nor can I admire that reverence of the word of God, which charges the use of any portion of it, with dishonoring the Savior of men.† The candid, and enlightened christian, has *not so learned Christ*.

* The Episcopalian, in vindicating his views of Ecclesiastical order, draws largely upon the practice of the second, third, and fourth centuries. The argument from this practice, is not satisfactory to the Presbyterian ; yet it is remarkable how superior the episcopal argument from this source, in favor of his form of church government, is, to that of the Presbyterian, in favor of a human Psalmody. That the worth of the argument can be understood in the one case, and not in the other, is an instance, among many others, of the imperfection of the human mind, and admonishes us to beware of a favorite hypothesis.

† Latta's Discourse, p. 48. 77.

The object with which I set out, is yet in view. I contemplate, in these pages, an attempt to unite the devout members of the visible Church. Many of you, in the mean time, are practically dividing them. You exclude a divine, and prefer a human psalmody. Does your cause demand such a defence, as has now been reviewed? If so, it is full time you should abandon it; for it is a bad one. Can arguments of a better character, in defence of your hymns, and *imitations*, not be produced? If not, will you still, pertinaciously, continue a practice so insupportable, notwithstanding, too, its long train of unhappy consequences? *Nay; We hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation; though we thus speak.*

LETTER III.

MODERN HISTORY OF PSALMODY.

Summary remarks. Waldenses. Wickliff. Huss. Luther. Calvin. Church of England. Scotland. Watts. American Churches. Congregationalists. Presbyterians. Associate. Associate Reformed. Reformed Presbyterians. Sentiments and practice of. Reflexions.

Dear Brethren,

IT appears, from the records of the early periods of the church, that christians, in their public assemblies, praised God in the language of scripture songs. It also appears, that the term, *hymn*, was applied to David's psalms. We have also seen, that, though psalmody was universal in the eastern churches, from the beginning; yet it was not general, in those of the west, before the fourth century. In that age, it likewise appears to have been the practice of certain heretics, to reproach the orthodox, for singing with sobriety the divine songs of inspiration, preferring, to them, the inflammatory compositions of their own invention. We now turn to the history of Psalmody in later times.

In the middle ages, the ages, too, of moral gloom and terrible superstition, the purest section of the church of God, was found in the vallies of Piedmont. Among the Waldenses were found the simplicity of the apostolic order, and the purity of evangelical worship. They sung, " 'mid Alpine cliffs," the psalms of scripture. And, long before the reformation dawned on Europe, they sung them in metre. "The Albigenses in 1210, were metre psalm singers." The morning star of the reformation used them. *Wickliff* is blamed, by some, for singing metre psalms.—*John Huss*, in the fifteenth, as *Wickliff* had done in the fourteenth century,* sung the psalms in verse. These, none of these, were friends, either to papal domination, or to Arian heresy.†

* Smith's Prim Psal. p. 270.

† When the dark and cruel reign of Antichrist commenced; those who held the faith, worship, and order of the gospel, were found in the vallies of Piedmont. In the middle ages, as at this day, they suffered indescribable persecutions from the hands of "the son of perdition." No history is more interesting than theirs. In those ages when darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness all other people, the *Vaudois*, as *Thuanus*, who was their enemy, relates, "could all read and write. They were acquainted with French so far as was needful for understanding the bible, and the singing of Psalms."‡ It was required of those who were to be ordained to the ministry, along with other scriptures, to commit to memory "the writings of

‡ Milner.

But what was the course pursued at the Reformation? that period when God, in remarkable providences descended, to free the human mind from chains, and his church from bondage? The reformers celebrated the praise of their Redeemer; and they did so in the use of scripture songs. *Luther*, as early as the year 1525, published a metre version of the psalms. In the same year, at Augsburg, was published a poetic translation of the whole book, by another hand.

In the year 1543, under the auspices of *Calvin*, fifty of the psalms, translated into verse by *Marmot*, a refugee from papal persecution, were printed at Geneva. *Marmot* died shortly after this; and *Beza*, the devout, learned, and polished, companion of Calvin, versified the remainder. The whole book, thus versified, was, in a few years published. Such was

David.* || Numbers of those, who, under the persecution of the Duke of Savoy, A. D. 1686, sought a refuge in the Swiss cantons, three years after, returned under their pastor, *Arnaud*, who was also their martial chief. Having overcome their enemies, and regained their native vallies, "at the church of Guigou they engaged in worship, sang the 74 Psalm, and their colonel and pastor, *Arnaud*, preached on the 129 Psalm." § Thus we see the psalms of David were sung, by the best of men in every age.

|| Milner. § Mem. of Waldenses, by a clergyman of the Church of England.

the demand then for the book of psalms, that the press was unable to meet in. In A. D. 1558, the use of it was interdicted by a bull from Rome. The Protestants of that day did not perceive, that it *dulled their worship*; nor did the perverters of the Church's faith, hope to derive any benefit to their cause from its use. It was devoutly sung by the reformers, and *burlesqued by the papists*.

In England, the friends of reform were also the friends of the Bible psalms. For their use, several of them were turned into metre by *Wyatt* and others; but a full version was not obtained, till after the accession of Elizabeth. The year 1562 presented that by *Sternhold, Hopkins, Cox, Norton, &c.* This was used in the Church of England, till superseded by the more imperfect version of *Tate and Brady*,*

* This innovation was not effected without a struggle. Hear on this the testimony of a man, who, in taste and criticism, had no superior—"It was a change much for the worse, when the *pedantry of pretenders* to taste in literary composition thrust out this excellent translation (Sternhold and Hopkins') from many of our churches, to make room for what still goes by the name of the new version, that of Tate and Brady.—The innovation when it was first attempted, was opposed, though in the end, unsuccessfully, by the *soundest divines, the most accomplished scholars, and the men of the truest taste*, at that time in the seat of authority in the church of England."†

† Bishop Horsey, pref. to his version.

in A. D. 1696. The Puritans of England, in A. D. 1562 contended, among other things, for reform in the psalmody of the Church. They proposed “ That *the psalms* should be sung distinctly by the whole congregation.” Some of the reformers in that kingdom, amidst the commotions of the times, it seems, for a little, hesitated, as to the propriety of psalmody in the Church; this appears from one of *Lati-mer’s* orders, in A. D. 1537, when bishop of Worcester. The same thing is intimated in a protestation of some of the clergy, in the previous year, within the province of Canterbury.* But none who admitted the propriety of singing, ever doubted the evangelical character of inspired songs; or, refused to employ them in sacred praise. This is a refinement of modern evangelizers.

In the Scottish Church, the reformers, from the first, practised psalmody. It is said they sung the book of psalms in prose; the form, perhaps, in which it should still be used. Before A. D. 1546, there is no authentic account, of any use of metred psalms in that church; but both before, and after that period, in one

† Prim. Psal.

form or another, the book of Psalms was uniformly employed in their congregations.*

In 1649, the general assembly at Edinburgh, adopted the version which she still uses. The ground work of this was laid by *Sir Thomas Rouse*, who is represented as a man of piety. It was recommended to the attention of the assembly of Divines at Westminster. Under their correcting hand, in the course of several years, it was improved. It was then forwarded to the north, and was, by the supreme judicatory of the Scottish Church, committed to committees for revision. Years were by them employed in comparing it with the original Hebrew, and in attempting to carry as much as possible of the spirit of the primitive composition, into the translation.† And, the man of literature and taste, who shall carefully examine the subject, it is believed, will admit, that they admirably succeeded. Like the version of the bible, this of the psalms,

* In A. D. 1556, versified psalms were commonly sung in their assemblies. The whole book of psalms, however, was not put into measure before 1559||; from which period, a version, first published at Geneva, was authorized, till superseded by that still used in the church of Scotland.

|| *Mc Crie's life of Knox*, p 415.;

† *Acts of Assembly*, p. 353. 428. 479.

is not remarkable for elegance of diction ; but it is remarkably literal. To present the book of Psalms in its native simplicity, beauties, and force, was the aim of the Westminster divines, as well as of the Assembly at Edinburgh. To the man of God, to the child of grace, and man of legitimate taste, these characteristics must be a recommendation.* In the American Churches, this version was extensively used ; and, in all the Presbyterian Churches of the southern and middle states, till a recent period, none other was admitted.

* The testimony of Dr. *Ridgely*, in his system of divinity, is not only decidedly in favor of the book of Psalms being suitable, for the praise of the New Testament church ; but also for the use of the Scottish version. He gives it the preference above every other. *Boswell*, too, the friend of Johnson, who gave stability to our language, was a man of talent, and of taste. He gives his testimony in favor of this version, as the best extant.

Take his own words : " The phrase, "vexing thoughts," is, I think very expressive. It has been familiar to me from my childhood ; it is to be found in the "Psalms in metre," used in the churches of Scotland, Psal. 43—5.

Why art thou then cast down my soul ?

What should discourage thee ?

And why with vexing thoughts art thou

Disquieted in me ?

Some allowance must no doubt be made for early prepossessions. But at a maturer period of life, after looking at various metrical versions of the Psalms, I am well satisfied that the version used in Scotland, is, upon the whole, the best ; and that it is vain to think of having a better. It has in general a simplicity, and *unction* of sacred poesy ; and in many parts its transposition is admirable." *Life of Dr. Johnson*, vol. 2. p. 282.

The justly celebrated Rev William Romaine, likewise, gives his testimony to the excellence of this version. I shall gratify

Early in the last century, Dr. *Watts*, in England, published his *Imitation of some of David's Psalms*, accompanied with other hymns. These he introduced to public notice, by prefaces, containing a bitter libel against the original songs of Zion. The days of Puritanic zeal had then passed away. The licentious and unprincipled reigns, of the second Charles and James, had given a shock to the morals, and to the piety of the nation, under the influence of which they languished, and were ready to expire. The principles of infidelity had extended to every department of the social body, and were, in both church and state, more extensively embraced, than is generally admitted. Comparatively few of Zion's most conspicuous sons, escaped the contagion of a maddening philosophy, which, in its phrenzy, more

my reader with a few extracts from his *Essay on Psalmody*, a work which very lately came to my hand. "Sternhold and Hopkins," he observes, "had a scrupulous regard for the very words of scripture—the versification is not always smooth—But what is a thousand times more valuable, it is generally the sentiment of the Holy Spirit.—This should silence every objection—it is the word of God. *This version comes nearer the original than any I have seen, except the Scotch, which I have made use of when it appeared to me better expressed than the English.—Here is every thing great, and noble, and divine, although not in Dr. Watts' way or style. It is not—as good old Mr. Hall used to call it, Watts' jingle.*"

Romaine's Works. vol. 8. p. 339.

openly, at a succeeding period, expressed the idle hope, of universally desolating the heritage of God. At such a time, it is not strange, that an indulgent ear should be given to unhallowed suggestions, against any portion of the word of God ; and, especially, when recommended by the imposing pretensions to superior liberality. In the days of martyrdom, for reading the word of God, it was not deemed unsuitable, in songs of praise, to employ the language of the Holy Ghost. But other times succeeded, when religious sentiment of another cast, and piety of another tone, were countenanced.* It was found that the use of scripture songs, “ flattened devotion, awakened regret, and touched all the springs of uneasiness in the worshipper’s breast.”† Such were the sentiments, and such was the language of Dr. *Watts*.

The Imitation of the psalms by Dr. Watts, and his hymns, recommended by the senti-

* “ Human compositions are preferred to divine. Man’s poetry is exalted above the poetry of the Holy Ghost.—The word of man has got a preference in the church above the word of God.—It is not difficult to account for this strange practice.—Our people had lost sight of the meaning of the Psalms.—*They did not see their relation to Jesus Christ.* This happened when vital religion began to decay among us more than a century ago.”—*Romaine’s Works*, vol. 8. p. 321.

† Dr. Watts,

ments of his prefaces, found their way across the Atlantic, and gradually obtained footing, in the Congregational Churches of New England. As these advanced, the scripture songs retired, and, with them, no small share of the orthodox principles, the theological intelligence, and the holy practice, that had previously distinguished the Puritans of our country, the descendants of the pilgrims.

The Synod of New-York and Philadelphia, now the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, had continued to employ the scripture psalms, and in that version used in the church of Scotland. A majority of their people, it is believed, were favorable to that version. Their connexion with the Congregationalists of New England, contributed to recommend to their attention the Imitation of *Dr. Watts*, as improved by *Mr. Barlow*. It was at length adopted by the supreme judicatory of this church; and thus, for the first time, a judicial sanction was given to that composure, declaring it more fit for christian worship, than a correct version of inspired psalms! The decision was not received very cordially by many of her members. Violent

animosities, bitterness of spirit, schisms and divisions, were, for a time, the most prominent consequences of the measure.

Other denominations of christians, when they saw the most numerous, and most influential body of professors in the United States, abandon the songs of inspiration, practically declaring them unfit for christian lips, took the alarm. They considered the language of Dr. Watts, on this subject, to be impious. His arguments, in favor of his own compositions, were viewed as invectives against an important portion of the word of God. Hence, in their public ministrations, they testified against the ground he had taken, and the very unhappy language he had used, as well as against those who had entered into his views, by the adoption of his productions, in place of the Book of Psalms; while they vindicated the integrity of the oracles of truth, holding them all to be profitable for instruction in righteousness.—The press, too, was enlisted in the contest, and judicial deeds, warning against, and forbidding the use of those innovations, were passed. The Associate, the Associate Reformed, and Reformed Presbyterian Church-

es, were all conspicuous in defence of inspired psalms and hymns, as suitable to the worship of the Church of God.

It is profitable, though not always pleasant, to mark the origin, progress, and change of opinions, and their correspondent practices. How often, alas ! is the declaration of principles and order, the offspring, not of deep laid conviction, but of transient circumstances.—The professions of public bodies afford but little security, for the course the individuals composing them will pursue. We well remember the time when one of these churches, the Associate Reformed, zealously declared, and repeatedly sanctioned deeds, in opposition to the introduction of human composures in the worship of God. Watts' imitation and hymns were in view, when, in a judicial act, this church, after a panegyric on the book of Psalms, declared—"Nor shall any composures, *merely human*, be sung in any of the Associate Reformed Churches." It was, indeed, by some of the members of that church, as well as by others, suspected that the words, *merely human*, were calculated, if not intended, to cover a retrea from this ground at some

convenient time. But the suspicion was deemed ungenerous, and the expression of it was branded with the charge of slander. The dubious terms were explained, so as to mitigate the fears of the scrupulous. The amiable Mr. *Hemphill*, in his explanation of what is a *merely human* composure, fully takes in all such as the poetic works of Dr. Watts. He concludes his remarks in these words: "We prefer a translation of these divine songs, (the scripture Psalms,) to human composes however excellent." In this, there is no doubt, Mr. Hemphill was sincere. Suspicious existed, however, that all of his brethren were not equally so. Whether these suspicions were well or ill founded, is not for us to say. Subsequent events will not, perhaps, justify them. Human conduct is much influenced by circumstances; and purity of intention may be consistent with contradictory acts.

In the neighborhood of those churches, where the compositions of Watts were adopted, and produced dissatisfaction, the Associate Reformed ministers were not scrupulous, in keeping alive the discontents that existed: It is no impeachment of their motives, when it is

stated as a fact, that they profited by these discontents. Separation from former connexions, on the ground of Psalmody, was encouraged ; and, by such as separated, their churches, in various parts of the continent, were enlarged, and some almost wholly formed. The accession of the Rev'd Mr. Rankin, and multitudes of private members, from the Presbyterian Church, is still fresh in our recollection. But, in the mean time, some of the brethren, when occasionally called to direct the public worship, in the congregations of another connexion, used, without hesitation, the *Imitation of the psalms*.

This was thought, by many, not to comport with that candor, and regard to consistency, which should characterize the movements of that ministry which had, by so many pledges, invited public confidence to repose in its stability. To denounce, in public deeds, as will worship, the use of all such composesures as the hymns of Dr. Watts ; to employ this as an instrument of rending churches, and of breaking up former connexions ; while, in other places, they practised what had been publicly denounced, as a corruption of religious worship, and

acted upon as a sufficient ground of separation, in ecclesiastical communion; was deemed, by not a few, who, probably, did not sufficiently qualify the severity of their conclusions, by the mitigations of charity, not easily reconcilable with candor.

In their session of May, 1816, their general Synod passed an act, admitting into their churches the psalm book of the Reformed Dutch Church, according to its last revision. This measure set aside their former act on this subject. Their resolution runs in the following terms: "*Resolved*, That the version of the book of Psalms, in the Old Testament, recently prepared for the use of the Reformed Dutch Church in America, be permitted to be used," &c. Now, to a person unacquainted with the real matter of fact, it would appear from this, that the Reformed Dutch Church had recently prepared a version of the book of psalms.—Nothing, however, can be farther from the truth. All that the committee of that Church was authorized to do, in the matter, was, to make an "improved and enlarged" selection of psalms and hymns.* The committee fulfilled their appointment, by giving their psalm

book a character more remote, from the "book of Psalms, in the old Testament," than was the one which they formerly used. The truth is, it is a selection, chiefly, from Watts, and embraces a practical recognition of the very unwarrantable sentiments of the Doctor, respecting the book of Psalms. For instance, to his twenty four lines, in place of the whole 109 psalm, as well as to other changes and omissions, a sanction is thus given. To go thus far, these sons of the venerable church of Holland, had to violate the principles of her constitution.* The Associate Reformed brethren have adopted this selection, and, shall we say, unwittingly, presented it to their people as *a recent version of the book of Psalms, in the Old Testament!* Since these brethren are now persuaded that they were, on this subject, formerly in the wrong; and being now satisfied, that their congregations would be more edified, by using a *mutilated imitation* of the psalms, than by the psalms themselves; and, seeing they act upon this, would it not have been more manly, at once, to have declared in favor of the compositions of Dr. Watts? If the

* See Constit. of the Reformed Dutch Church, Art. 69.

rejection of *inspired songs* was the price of extended union, and the adoption of their *rivals* its destined bond, we would suppose this course of openness more eligible, than that which is pursued. That they, in this business, a business which will long be deplored; aimed at the extension of fraternal communion, and the edification of Zion, charity induces us to suppose; for, the hypothesis of playing a double game with the scrupulosity of their own people, and the immobility of the Holland Church, is refuted, we would hope, not only by a liberal construction of conduct; but also by the character of those, whose agency carried the measure.

It is, nevertheless, painful to have confidence met by disappointment. The course pursued, by the Associate Reformed Church, has not been marked by any great degree of consistency. Her decisions and her counter decisions; her constitution and discordant administration, do not authorize that confidence, which the personal respectability of her ministry would seem to invite. I would not impeach her motives of action; because, in a future expose, she may vindicate them as correct. I

will not therefore assert, that she, as a distinct christian society, was formed on the principle of expediency ; nor will I say, that, in her various changes, she has acted merely on this principle, for, by itself, it is a paltry one ; charity forbids severity of animadversion, and, whatever may be the result, candor and liberality instruct us to hope, that it will not only be over-ruled for general good, but will also develope the purest motives, to have actuated those gentlemen who have appeared conspicuous, in the origin and progress of these measures. But, however *well meant*, the measure respecting psalmody is a *bad one*. It is at once an abandonment of a divine institution, a desertion of those who plead for it, and the violation of a solemn pledge to the contrary. For this we should weep in secret.

From an impartial review of the Church's history, ancient and modern, we are authorized to infer, that, in every age, her psalmody embraced the book of Psalms. Without any prejudice to their cause, who are the advocates of Zion's songs, it may be, and is, admitted, that human composures existed, and in some sections of the christian commonwealth, had a

place beside inspired composures. But their existence and use, neither prove, nor disprove, a divine appointment. That fact must be settled by other evidence, than the practice of either ancient or modern days.

That the book of Psalms, in whole or in part, was unfit for christian praise, was a discovery left to be made, in the light of contending systems, political, moral, and religious, in the eighteenth century. Ancient piety, I think, would not have listened with patience to be told, that the words of inspiration "darkened our views of God the Savior, tended to make heresy triumphant," and that David was unfit to appear in the sanctuary, till converted into a christian by such a man as Dr. Watts. Had we no information on the subject, but what the Dr.'s prefaces supply, we would be tempted to inquire, whether he was, indeed, friendly to our religion, or, whether he was an enemy in disguise. We have read "Christianity as old as the creation"; an imposing title, covering a bold attack upon divine revelation. An *imitation* of a portion of David's psalms, accompanied by a libel against the rest, by Dr. Watts, promises little more

than the insidious publication of Mr. Tindal. And, certainly, if there be, as is more than intimated by the Dr. and his friends, a contradiction between the word of God in the Old Testament, and the word of God in the New Testament, both must fall. The force on the one side would then be equal to that on the other. Forces equal and contrary, effect their mutual destruction. At this rate, we have no divine revelation. So the deist has said, and, as often as he has said it, his assertion has been refuted. And tho' the *imitator* of the psalms, has furnished premises for a similar conclusion, we will not believe him; for we know his premises are false, and the conclusions, we trust, he did not himself believe.—Nay; tho' he asserted the existence of a contradiction,* it was not, we wish to believe, a settled article of his creed.

The *imitator* proposed to convert David, the sweet singer of Israel, into a christian.† The psalms, such of them, at least, as he thought worthy of imitation, must be made to

* " Psal. 69. 26—28. is *so* CONTRARY to the new commandment of *loving our enemies*," &c. *Watts' Pref.* p. 5.

† *Watts' Pref.* p. 10.

speak a language, which, according to the
reformer of David, the Holy Ghost did not
 make them speak. Still, however, *reformed*
 as David was, he was unfit for the sanctuaries
 of America. The *imitation*, and hymns of
 Dr. Watts, were adapted to the British mon-
 archy ; America had, happily, become both in-
 dependent and republican. The reformer
 must be reformed. Those compositions which
 superseded the hymns of inspiration, must,
 after our revolution, be " adapted to the chris-
 tian worship in the United States," and *Joel*
Barlow, Esq. performs the important work.

In these days of tumult and commotion
 there is nothing wonderful. Astonishing e-
 vents pass in succession so close, that time is
 not given them to impress the mind. The
 commotion will, however, subside, and the
 tumult will be stilled. What is now permit-
 ted to pass by, without remark, will fill the
 men of a future age with surprise. When
 they shall have admitted, in its full bearing,
 the truth, that God is not affected by political
 changes, and, that the revolutions of empires
 do not authorize a change in the appointments
 of Christ ; it may, perhaps, seem strange

to them, that many pious men deemed that the christian worship, on the other side of the Atlantic, might be something different from what it was in the United States; or, that our worship, when independent states, ought to be changed from what it was, when we were dependent colonies. They will readily perceive, that, on the principle which would justify the hypothesis, no two individuals could ever unite, in the use of the same psalm; because, it is not likely, that their circumstances would ever be precisely the same. If what many of our eastern friends have said of Mr. Barlow be correct, that he was an infidel, it may, too, perhaps, sound strange, that he was employed to furnish them with evangelical songs for their solemn praise.* But, in human life, there are moments of inexplicable infatuation. How else account for the strange course pursued, in reference to psalmody, by men of such elevated standing as the American churches can claim as their own? Such events, with a dis-

* I would not be understood to assert, that Mr. Barlow was an infidel. He may have been so, but I have not evidence to justify me in saying it; many, however, who employ his revision of the imitation of the Psalms, have professed to believe that he was. at least, no friend to christianity.

inct and solemn voice, urge the divine injunctions—*Be not high minded but fear—and lean not unto thine own understanding.*

LETTER IV.

REASONS FOR RETAINING THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

Subject stated. Versions. Arguments. Divine institution. Suitableness of matter. Excellence. Human compositions not appointed. Bad arguments. Evil tendency of preferring human to inspired songs.—Summary.

Dear Brethren,

IN this letter, I propose a brief discussion of the following question : *Ought the Book of Psalms to be used still, in the public service of the Church ?* On the determination of this question, the issue of the controversy depends. The matter in debate should not be confounded with others, that may be but very remotely, or, incidentally connected with it.

The inquiry, then, is not, whether it be lawful to use, in the praises of God, any other inspired song, besides what are found in the Book

of Psalms. This, so far as I know, has never been a matter of contention.* Nor is it any matter of dispute, in the present instance, what *version* of the inspired songs, shall be used.—The question at issue is; shall we have *any version* of this divine book, as the matter of our praise? Those on the one side expressly take the affirmative, and say, let us have the best version; and, if practicable, let us have a better than any now extant. On the other side, this has been as explicitly refused. *The Book of Psalms is actually excluded from the psalmody of their churches.* I would farther add, that the question is not, whether, in every case, it is unlawful to employ hymns of human

* This subject came before the General Assembly of the Scottish Church in 1647, 1648, 1686, and before the Associate (Burgher) Synod, in 1747. || These bodies appear to have fully admitted the lawfulness of using, in psalmody, any scripture song. But they approved not of *loose* paraphrases. Their caution, and long exclusive use of the Book of Psalms, shew that they deemed it sufficient; and that any thing beyond it, was rather an allowable indulgence, than an indispensable privilege.

- Upon the merits of this question I give no opinion. Whatever may be said of its *lawfulness*, we know it is not *expedient*, to seek the matter of our psalmody beyond the Book of Psalms. *There is a sufficiency.* It is selected by the Spirit of God, and by the Church's Head given for this purpose. "True religion has never progressed where it has been departed from." Were my opinion asked I would say—*Study, understand, digest, use well, the Book of Psalms,* and, it is more than probable, you will be content.

|| Acts of assembly—Rev. R. Erskine's works, vol. 10.

composition. That against which we remonstrate, is, *the expulsion of the Book of Psalms by an IMITATION ; the exclusion of the spiritual songs of inspiration, by adopting the collected volumes of hymns, which are not inspired.*

I offer only a word more respecting versions. I have said, the dispute is not about *versions* ; this should be kept in recollection. Let us have that which *justly* merits the name of a *version*, and the contest shall end. We ought, indeed, to select the best. We believe that used in the Church of Scotland, in the Associate and Reformed Presbyterian Churches, is the best ; we do not say it is perfect ; it is susceptible of improvement, as the version of our Bible is ; but we have none better ; we have no other one so good. If the genius of the original ; the language of the Spirit of God ; simplicity of diction ; energy of thought ; striking imagery ; and transforming sentiment, be recommendations, it is believed this translation has them, in a degree, to which no other one, in verse, in our language can lay claim.

We know, indeed, other compositions, the verbiage of which glides more smoothly along. And, to those, who pay a greater deference to

sound than to sentiment, it is not doubted, such will afford more pleasure. But the man of mind, the scholar of cultivated taste, the christian of exalted piety, will, when left to the decision of their own judgment, unite in the preference of sense to sound ; of body to shadow ; and of the word of God to that of man. In more cases than that of psalmody, the corruption of religious taste, from a rage of innovation, a spirit of easy accommodation, neutrality of mind, or causes of equally unworthy character, is lamented by not a few. But of this enough. I proceed to state and vindicate the following position.

A CORRECT VERSION OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS, SHOULD BE EMPLOYED IN THE PSALMODY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

I vindicate this assertion, on the ground of divine appointment—on the ground of the suitability of this book—of its superior excellence, above all human composures—of the uncertainty of the divine permission of such human composures—of the unsatisfactory nature of the arguments used, to recommend them—and the dangerous consequences of

their introduction into the public worship of the Church.

DIVINE APPOINTMENT is my first reason, for the continued use of the Book of Psalms, in the praises offered to God in Zion. The compositions of this Book were given for this purpose. They were actually employed in the church of God, with his approbation; and were suitable for the service of praise. Their form, their nature, and their designation; unite, in pointing out their use. I do not rest the proof of the divine institution of these sacred odes, as the matter of the Church's psalmody, on the simple fact of a reforming king of Judah commanding that they should be employed,* I add to that evidence the facts, that in the days of inspiration and prophecy, these divine compositions were so used; that their name and composition intimate that to have been their appropriate use; and, that their matter, and their structure, render them fit, for this service of the Tabernacle of God, under every dispensation of his grace. That the hymn sung by our Lord and his disciples, after the institution of the eucharistic

* 2 Chron. 29. 30.

supper, was a portion of that part of the Book of Psalms, called the *Hallel* by the Jews, and which they usually sung at the paschal solemnity, is admitted, as more than probable, by all, except those individuals, who may have some private purpose to uphold by its denial.*

That, in the Book of Psalms, there are typical allusions to the usages of the Old Testament, no more unfits it for christian worship, than did the New Testament language of many of the Psalms, render them unfit for the devotions of the Israelites; or, than New Testament allusions to ancient rites, prove it unsuitable for a christian directory. Objections against the continued use of inspired songs, on this ground, indicate such a defective degree of information, as should not be hastily imputed,

* "As to the *hymn* itself, we know from the universal consent of Jewish antiquity, that it was composed of Psalms 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, and 118, termed by the Jews *HALEL*, from *HALELU-JAH*, the first word in psalm 113th. These six psalms were always sung at every paschal solemnity. They sung this great *hallel* on account of the five great benefits referred to in it; viz. 1. The Exodus from Egypt. 2. The miraculous division of the Red Sea. 3. The promulgation of the law. 4. The Resurrection of the dead. 5. The passion of Messiah."

Clarke's note on *Mat.* 26. 30.

See also Ravanelli Biblioth. under the word *hymnus*. Lightfoot says on this subject, "He who could have inspired every disciple to have been a David—sings the Psalms of David,"

Works, vol. 2. p. 1160.

even to those who possess but very common facilities, for christian instruction.

For the use of these songs, we have New Testament authority. Its inspired writers recognize this sacred collection of inspired hymns, under the name of the *Book of Psalms*.* Under this name, we do not know, that they acknowledged any other. If they did, *where is it now?* Listen to an apostolic command : *Is any merry? Let him sing psalms.*† Had the saints of those days, as doubtless they did, expressed the sacred gladness of their hearts, in singing one of David's psalms, would that have been an act of obedience, or of disobedience? At this day none will, I presume, have the hardihood to say, by doing so, they would have sinned against the glory of the New Testament. The act would have been one of obedience. Then it is confessed, that the singing of the Book of Psalms, is an institution, even under the present dispensation, of divine authority.

To one consideration more, under this head, we should carefully attend. It is this : the

* Luke, 20. 42. & 24. 44. Act. 1. 26.

† Jam. 5. 13.

whole word of God is adapted to general edification ; but to profit by it, *its several parts must be specially applied to the particular ends for which they are given.* The commands, the promises, the examples, of scripture, for instance, are all instructive, generally ; but in addition to this, each of these has its specific use. Now, the well instructed saint will apply these several portions, according to their intention. Not to employ them particularly, in addition to a general utility, for the special purposes for which they are given, would be to misuse them ; it would be, to say the least, criminally to neglect them.

The application of the remark just made, is plain ; the Book of Psalms was given as a part of that revelation which is profitable for instruction ; but it was, especially, given to the church as the matter of her psalmody ; not as *a model*, which she might imitate at pleasure, and substitute the imitation in place of the original, but as songs to be used in the exercise of praise. Whatever use, then, we may make of them, otherwise, if we set them aside, and do not apply them, to this specific purpose, we must be chargeable with neglecting them,

in that for which God has more particularly given them. To this point I request the attention, of such as may honor this letter with a reading.

The singing of praise, publicly, is a duty. It is not an extemporary exercise ; it requires a form of psalmody. God has provided for this. His Spirit has dictated a great variety of songs—and collected into *one Book*, for the use of the church, those he judged proper.—The question, then, is, shall we reject *that* which God has provided, and prefer *our own* effusions ; or, receive *his* ? Turn it as you will, this is really the inquiry. In this collection are to be found *Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.** We are expressly commanded to sing these, Col. 3. 16. I request the objector, for *once*, not to quibble ; and, again, *I demand evidence of the existence, in the apostolic age, of any other PSALMS, AND HYMNS, AND SPIRITUAL SONGS, than those contained in scripture.*

* A reference to Trommill's concordance of the Septuagint, under the word *HYMNOS*, will amply prove, that compositions corresponding to the *hymn*, and *song*, of the Greek Testament, are abundant in the Book of Psalms. Indeed the Greek version of the Psalms has only to be opened, and their titles prove this ; and the Greek version of the Old Testament, was generally used in the apostolic age.

That these inspired compositions once occupied a place in the Church of God, by divine appointment, as suitable matter of her psalmody, will not now be seriously denied.* The Church, in all ages, is one. Whatever institutions she has once received, from the hand of her Lord, she is bound to observe, until he shall free her from the obligation, or, by an act of his authority, deprive her of the privilege. But, in what page of the New Testament, has the Church's Head abrogated the use of her inspired hymns? or forbidden her children the consolations they so often found, in chanting them to his praise? The point is too obvious for further pursuit. I cannot bring my mind to reason it lower. The consistent christian will at once admit—The

“ “ *Divine institution cannot be pleaded with any plausibility, either from scripture or reason,*” says Dr. L. Disc. p. 77.—“ I have proved,” says Mr. Freeman, “ that we have no authority, *divine nor human*, for singing David's Psalms—they should not be used.”—P. 20. Pray, what evidence is requisite to establish an appointment, as divine? How prove the divine right of church government? How prove the divine appointment of infant baptism? Ah! how thoughtlessly men will talk and write. And yet, Mr. F. admits, that some of David's Psalms may be used. Yes, even without appointment, *divine or human*; and that, notwithstanding his assertion, that no one of these psalms leads to God through Christ!—P. 6, *et alibi*. This shows a gospel spirit with a witness. Worship without divine appointment! worship, as a *deist*, a God out of Christ! Wonderful concession!

Book of Psalms, in the Church's Psalmody, had the sanction of divine authority ; that sanction has never been *disannulled* ; therefore, its use, as such, is yet of God's appointment.

THE ADAPTATION OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS TO THE PURPOSES OF SACRED PRAISE, furnishes me with a second argument for its continuance. Have we beheld the glory of God ? Are we desirous of celebrating his perfections, that are so illustriously displayed, in his creative, and providential works ? This inspired Book presents us with a suitable song : *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breathing of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap : he layeth up the depth in store houses—He spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast. The heavens declare the glory of God ; and the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night teacheth knowledge.* &c.* And, how imimitably fine the descriptions of divine providence are, in the 104, and 107, and other psalms, need not be told to the man of taste and piety.

* Ps. 33. and 19.

Would we sing the frailty and sorrows of man? His frailties are described with a master's hand: *His days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. Man is like to vanity; his days are as a shadow that passeth away.** His woes are delineated with the pen of sorrow. In Zion's elegiac lines, flow such tears of affliction as the weeping muse of Greece or Rome could never shed. The penitent sows in tears; those tears are represented as his bread and his drink; they are precious in the sight of God; he records their number in his book, and collects them in his bottle.† And never were sentiments of deep distress, couched in language, at once so tender and so emphatic, as in the 88 Psalm. The griefs of a public spirit are expressed with eloquence divine. Read as a specimen of this the 79th of this sacred collection, and then turn to the 137, where an unparalleled group of the tenderest sentiments, and most affecting imagery will be found. *By the rivers of Ba-*

* See Psalms, 90, 103, 109.23, 144-4.

† Ps. 56.8, & Ps. 80.5, & 126.5.

bylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

Would we, in the song we sing to God, dilate on the graces of the Spirit, and on their varied actings? would we sing the humbling, and the elevating exercises of the saint? These are themes which enter largely into the composition, and constitute no small share of the beauty, of our Bible Psalms. They have, too, this advantage above others; they are delineated with infallible correctness.

Is it our wish to embrace in our song, the distinguishing blessings of salvation? These are found in our divine odes. The grace of God in election,* in redemption,† in pardon,‡ in communion,|| are sung, in these inspired verses. Here, likewise, the saint finds assurance of safety in the vale of death, and of victory over the grave, together with the enjoyment of eternal life.§ These, and their kindred blessings, give form and vitality to the whole system of scripture song.

Do the sufferings of the Son of God, by which he purchased his church, and his tri-

* Ps. 65. 4. † Ps. 39. 22. & 130. 7. 8. ‡ Ps. 32. 1. 2. & 103. 3. || Ps. 27. 4. § Ps. 23 & 16.

umph over the powers of death, occupy our attention? Do we wish to make these the subject of our praise? where are they sung in strains so melting, or in notes of such elevated sentiment, and expressive diction, as in the Book of Psalms? There we find the language he selected, when, suspended upon the cross, he suffered for us, the Father's wrath: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Into thine hand I commit my spirit.** There, too, we have his triumphal song. *God is gone up with a shout—Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.†* Would we sing his victorious march, in the spread of his gospel? All the language, in which it is described, is flat, compared with that which the Holy Ghost employs: *Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness—Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth—The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteous-*

* Psal. 22. 1. & 31. 5. † Ps. 68. 18.

ness hath he openly showed—all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.—*

Would we sing the awful scenes at the close of time? Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth that he may judge his people.— God is judge himself. Then to his saints will he shew the path of life; in his presence is fullness of joy; at his right hand are pleasures for evermore. Then too the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.† Thus, there is no attribute of Jehovah which is not celebrated; no gift of grace which is not confessed, no devout emotion of the heart, which is not described, nor achievement of the Savior, which is not sung, in the impressive language of the Holy Ghost.

I know, indeed, it has been said, that the preacher feels regret, in being confined to inspired psalms; that, after he had delivered a Gospel sermon, he could find no song by which he could, with propriety, close the so-

* Ps. 45. 3. 4. & Ps. 96. 10. & 98. 2. 3. &c.

† Psal. 50, & 16, & 9.

lemnities of the day. May we not venture to express our suspicion respecting those who talk at this rate, that their acquaintance with the scripture songs must be shamefully superficial ; or, that they preach *another gospel*, than that of the blessed God. For certain it is, that thousands, in different ages, have, with great faithfulness, ability, and success, preached the Gospel of Christ, without feeling any difficulty, in selecting a scripture psalm appropriate to the occasion.

I am not so fortunate as to remember any specifications on this subject. The declarations, it is believed, are general, and so calculated to cover a defective information, or, something not quite so excusable, as the case may require. We shall rest this point, till gentlemen of candor specify the particulars, in which the scripture psalms are either defective in matter, suitable for christian psalmody, or, contain matter unsuitable to the purpose of evangelical worship. Only let them be careful, not to occupy a ground that would exclude all social praise from the sanctuary of God. It is to be suspected, that complaints of this stamp, originate not from defect, or

What is unfit in scripture songs, but from a vitiated taste in spiritual things. It requires more than unsupported assertion, or mere declamation, to satisfy the mind of him, who wishes to give a reason of his hope, that the songs of inspiration are not fit, as to matter, or not ample, as to variety, for all the purposes of evangelical praise. It is pity, indeed, that any christian should be found, who does not prefer the infallible dictates of the Spirit of grace, to the imperfect, however well intended, effusions of fallible men.

Take, then, this inspired Book ; it conveys the balm of consolation to the afflicted heart, directs the emotions of the child of grace, teaches a due estimate of a world of sin and sorrow, cherishes a living hope in a living Redeemer, and furnishes a guide and support for that faith by which the christian lives. Here you find concentrated the light of inspired truth, whence its beams ray out on the night of time—It pours a flood of day on the vale of death, dissipating its gloom, banishing its terrors, and giving a joyous prospect of the happy regions that lie beyond. Study the other pages of the Book of God—a knowledge of them will ena-

ble you to understand and to apply this sacred manual of inspired song ; but exchange it not for the shallow poetry of erring man. This leads me to

My third argument : THE SUPERIOR EXCELLENCE OF INSPIRED PSALMS. It is not my design to derogate from the merit of any man's productions. Claim for them all the respect you justly can ; still they are human. The structure is the work of man, and must be imperfect. The sentiment must be comparatively feeble, the views narrow, and the thought shallow. Will not the effect be proportionably superficial ? the effect cannot be more perfect than its cause. Is it not likewise to be expected, that man's moral imperfections will tinge his fairest works ? But how highly elevated, above all this, is the character of the living word of God, in Zion's inspired songs ! There we find unspotted purity ; the holiness of God transcribed. In those compositions is depth of thought, fulness of meaning, and an energy, which evinces their divine original. It is not merely the lighter powers of the mind that these address, nor the transient affections of the heart, which they awaken. The harp,

the organ, the well modulated voice, are all adequate to the production of such effects. The language of inspiration does more. It seizes the mind, arrests the understanding, subjugates the will, purifies the conscience, elevates and regulates the affections, and transforms into its own image, the whole man. Who dare venture, to assert these things of the best productions of uninspired men?

The christian will not forget, that the Book of Psalms was dictated by the Spirit of God, and contains very remarkable exhibitions of his diversified operations on the human heart, in the various circumstances, in which he places, or finds the saint. And, if he say, he esteems more highly the psalms, which are the production of the Spirit that sanctifies him, than he does the imperfect works of feeble man; let not his more liberal neighbor, who professes to see no difference between them, or, perhaps, who prefers the latter, brand his character with the odious appellation of bigot. The preference of the one, may have more of the semblance of modern liberality, that of the other, has not less of the character of ancient piety. I hold myself justified in choosing the best ver-

sion of inspired compositions, rather than the most perfect effusions of uninspired man.*

I HAVE NOT INDUBITABLE EVIDENCE OF THE PROPRIETY OF USING HUMAN COMPOSURES IN THE PSALMODY OF THE CHURCH. This is my fourth reason. And I hesitate more, when I *uniformly* see the admission of such, exclude those of the Spirit's inditing.

We should not venture, if a pure offering be in our power, to present to God one of a doubtful character. The denunciations of divine displeasure against those who do so,

* Milton, whose genius, it is somewhere said, "might have harmoniously mingled with the angels that announced the Messiah to be come," makes one of the devices of Satan against the Savior, an attempt to turn his attention to

"Æolian charms and Dorian lyric odes,"

rather than to the hymns, and psalms, and Hebrew songs, of inspiration. And the language, by which he represents the Redeemer repelling the assault, is applicable, not only to the productions of the Grecian muse, but to all human compositions, when put in competition with the word of God :

Remove their swelling epithets thick laid
As varnish on a harlot's cheek, the rest,
Thin sown with aught of profit or delight,
Will far be found unworthy to compare.
With Zion's songs, to all true tastes excelling,
Where God is praised aright,
Such are from God inspired."—*Parad. regained*, B. 4.

He needs to be but slightly acquainted, with the hymn books of the day, to perceive an affected air of familiarity, in addressing, or in speaking of, the Redeemer of men, which is as inconsistent with the dignity of worship, as with reverence. It is the cant of enthusiasm, which is equally abhorrent to good sense, and devout feeling.

should not be forgotten.* We are sure the language of inspiration, furnished us by God himself, will not be unacceptable in our offerings to him. But are we certain, after our rejection of his, that our own will find, before him, a gracious acceptance? When God furnishes us with words for a special purpose, let us prefer them to all others. In so doing we shall honor him. The Redeemer of souls, at a most interesting crisis of his mediation, poured forth the addresses of his heart in the language of the Book of Psalms.

With that which is doubtful, in the worship of God, we should not venture. He pronounces himself a *jealous God*. I know, indeed, that the thoughtless temerity of the spirit of innovation, is not likely to be deterred in its progress, by fear of divine disapprobation. There is usually, in such cases, the prevalence of some powerful passion, the boisterousness of whose rage, drowns, for the time, the suggestions of caution, and, not unfrequently, the authoritative voice of God himself. Until the storm shall have subsided, and the charm of novelty ceased to captivate, it is vain to hope,

* Mal. 1. 14.

that attention will be seriously turned, to a diligent comparison of such courses with the word of God. There is, notwithstanding, entertained a confident hope, that the time in which impious license has been taken with the Book of Psalms, has nearly expired. Whether there be danger of a corruption of worship, in the instance before us, or, a ground of charge for taking away any portion of the word of God, from its appointed use, deserves the careful inquiry of all concerned.

The Holy One of Israel has encircled his institutions with a solemnity, which prohibits profane intrusion. *The whole limit of his mountain is most holy.* Hear what he says and lay it to heart. *What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.* Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar†. This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men‡. But in vain do they worship me teaching for doctrines the*

* Deut. 12. 32. † Prov. 30. 6. ‡ Isa. 29. 13.

commandments of men. Why are ye subject to ordinances, after the commandments and doctrines of men?†* Whatever show of wisdom there may be in such, the Church's Head pronounces it *will worship*, and dishonorable to God, as well as dangerous to us; for saith *The Root and Offspring of David, the bright and morning Star; 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 that are written in this book.‡*

These scriptures, impressively, teach the danger of encroachment on the instituted ordinances of God. From them, and other portions which speak a similar language, we learn, that, in matters of religious worship, it is not sufficient authority for a practice, that it is not expressly forbidden. The worshipper should be prepared to answer, in a satisfactory man-

* Mat. 15. 9. † Col. 2. 20—22. ‡ Rev. 22. 16. 18. 19.

ner, should God propose to him the question, *Who hath required this at your hand?* It will not be satisfactory to say "The Lord has not explicitly prohibited such observances."—Were this plea of justification admissible, Rome might add rites innumerable, to her already cumbrous load, and, at the bar of God, stand acquitted in her impious impositions. Jehovah's prohibitory law is express; *Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.**

On this subject, we have more than mere verbal prohibitions. To succeeding ages, God has set up actual monuments of instruction, and of warning. The fact of Nadab and Abihu is full in point. In their character, there does not appear to have been any intentional opposition to the institutions of God. Thoughtlessly, perhaps, they brought, instead of the sacred fire from the altar, common fire from the hearth. This appears to have been a very trivial deviation from the appointed order; but it was a deviation; and God, by an alarming stroke, taught Israel that he would be sanctified in them that approached to worship him, by a punctilious regard to every part

* Deut. 12. 32.

of his institutions.* The death of Uzza† impresses on the mind a similar lesson. The apparent smallness of the deviation, and purity of intention, never, in the sight of God, consecrated an invasion of his prerogative; the exclusive right of settling the matter, and the forms of his own worship. Uzza was pious, and being actuated by a very laudable motive, the safety of the Ark of God, he took hold of it. But this was not required of him, and his life was forfeited by his devout temerity. God is still the same, strange-fire, and the intrusion of an unhallowed hand upon his ark, are as offensive now, as formerly they were. *His glory he will not give to another.†* Whether are those who use the scripture psalms, or those, who employ our multiplied hymn books, in the worship of God, most in danger in the case of psalmody, of unwarrantable innovation? Let this be a question, not of disputation, but of conscientious inquiry.

Upon no rite, institution, or truth, will the enlightened christian lay an undue weight; but he will try to give each that importance which it deserves. In the present state of man,

* Lev. 10. 1—3. † Sam. 6. 6. 7. ‡ Isa. 42. 8.

forms are as necessary to the public expression of the devotions of the heart, as are the body and its members to the soul, in the actions of life. The question, then, is, shall we take forms of our own device, or, shall we be contented with what God has given? *Moses was faithful in all his house.* He acted according to prescription, and ventured not to add, or to diminish. The singing of the Almighty's praise, in compositions of inspiration, is an appointment of God; the doing so, in human composesures, is not a divine ordinance. It *has* not been, it *cannot*, be proved to be God's institution. Hear, then, the prohibition, and apply it, *Touch not, taste not, handle not.*

THE ARGUMENTS EMPLOYED TO SET ASIDE THE BOOK OF PSALMS, FROM ITS PLACE IN THE PSALMODY OF THE CHURCH, ARE NOT ONLY UNSATISFACTORY, BUT FREQUENTLY IMPIOUS. This is my fifth reason for the continued use of scripture songs. Bad arguments are presumptive proof, that the cause they subserve is not good. When a style of reasoning inconsistent with due reverence for the sacred writings, is *uniformly* adopted to recommend a measure, we ought

to doubt the propriety of that measure. For a hundred years past, have the advocates of a *new psalmody* spoken a language, in vindicating it, which is afflictive to hear. What say you, brethren, of the cause, intellect, and moral feeling, of those who could speak, and write, in the manner stated below ?* It will be recol-

* "Our Psalmody—doth not only *flat* our devotion, but too often awakens our regret, and touches all the springs of uneasiness within us. I have been long convinced, that one great occasion of this evil arises from the *matter* and words to which we confine all our songs. Some of them are *almost opposite* to the spirit of the gospel:—Hence it comes to pass, that when spiritual affections are excited within us, and our souls are raised a little above this earth—we are *checked on a sudden in our ascent toward heaven*, by some expressions that are—fit only to be sung in the *worldly sanctuary*. When we are just entering into an evangelic frame:—the—*line*—which the clerk parcels out unto us, hath something in it so *extremely Jewish and cloudy*, that it *darkens our sight of God the Savior*. Thus by keeping too close to David in the house of God, the *vail of Moses is thrown over our hearts*. While we are kindling into divine love—some dreadful curse against men is propounded to our lips; as Psal. 69. 26—28 which is so *contrary* to the new commandment of loving our enemies.—Some sentences of the Psalmist—may compose our spirits to seriousness,—but we meet with a following line—that *breaks off our song in the midst*; our consciences are *affrighted*, lest we should speak a *falsehood* unto God: thus the powers of our souls are *shocked on a sudden*, and our spirits *ruffled*—it *almost always spoils* the devotion—Our lips speak *nothing but the heart of David*. Thus our hearts are, as it were, forbid the pursuit of the song, and then the harmony and the worship grow *dull of necessity*. Many ministers, and many private christians, have long groaned under this inconvenience—there are a *thousand lines* in it—the Book of Psalms—which were not made for a church in our days—I should rejoice to see—*David converted into a christian*: but because I cannot persuade others to attempt this *glorious work*, I have suffered myself to be persuaded to begin it." Having fin-

* Watts' Pref. Glasgow Ed. 1786.

lected, that when Dr. Watts wrote the preface to his hymns, the Book of Psalms was used in the churches.

Upon the sentiments quoted in the margin, I shall make but little comment. Did they not live in the writings of the authors, and, alas! constitute the animating principle of that

ished the imitation of the psalms, by which he proposed to *convert* David into a christian, the Dr. says, "If an author's opinion may be taken, he esteems it the greatest work that ever he has published, or ever hopes to do, for the use of the churches."^{*}

"There are *many hundred verses* in that book, (of psalms) which a christian cannot properly assume in singing—as Psal. 68—13—16 and 84 3. 6."—Psal. 69. 8. and Psal. 109. *are so full of cursings*, that they hardly become the tongue of a follower of the blessed Jesus."[†]

"By that time they are *fitted* for christian psalmody—the composure can hardly be called *inspired or divine* ‡—I could never persuade myself that the best way to raise a devout frame in plain christians, was to bring a *king or captain*, into our churches, and let him *lead*, and *dictate* the worship in *his own* style of royalty, or in the *language of a field of battle*."^{||} "I have collected and disposed the *most useful* verses of this Psalm, (119. See the note before it in the imitation)—But the verses are much transposed, to attain *some degree* of connexion."[—] Such were the sentiments, and such is the language of Dr. Watts, concerning the Book of Psalms. Hear another advocate of human inventions.

"If we were to adhere strictly to the Old Testament Psalmody, we cannot be said to *do any thing* in the name of the Lord Jesus, much less to give thanks unto God and the Father, by him. No mention is therein made of the Father as a distinct and special object of our devotion, nor of the Son, as being the appointed way of our access to him §—Whether these Psalms (mentioned, 1. Cor. 14. 26.) were the effect of previous study and inspiration untied, or of immediate suggestion,

^{*} Ibid. † Essay on Psalmody; Works, Vol. 7. p. 7. 8.

‡ Essay, p. 10. || Preface to the Imitation; Works, Vol. 7. 24. § Latta, p. 29.

rage, for "the meretricious ornaments" of a shallow poetry, which has nearly banished an inspired Psalm Book from the Church of God, I would not have permitted them a place in my pages. You, brethren, friends of the Bible, and advocates of its reputation, would not

they were certainly not designed to inspire them—(the converts to the gospel) with veneration and respect for the Psalms of David."† "Any person—will quickly perceive how remote psalms and hymns, formed upon it (the orthodox Nicene creed) would be from the—doctrine of the old Testament."‡ "Nor do I think it (the introduction of the psalms of David into the christian church) was very honorable to the cause of Christ—It deprived him of—divine honor—It deprived the asserters of his deity of all opportunity of bearing testimony to it in that part of their worship—It decided clearly in favor of that tenet of Arianism, that divine worship was to be paid only to the Father, and so had a direct tendency—to make heresy triumphant!!! "This usage spread—and it is no wonder that it spread speedily and extensively in the 4. century, an age devoted to Arianism."† The pages of this writer are crowded with much more to the same purpose. Listen to another—

"About this time (4th Cent.) the psalms of David were first introduced.—They were brought in by Arians, and not by orthodox christians—spread extensively—The principal reason was, because this century became devoted to Arianism."‡ And, repeats another, whose pages are far below criticism, and who would not have been noticed here, were it not for the company in which he is found—"By recommending the Psalms of David—their minds might be gradually led, from the doctrine of a divine Savior—The Psalms of David were properly suited to such a perversion of truth."††—Such is the style in which all the public advocates of modern hymns have spoken of the Book of Inspired Psalms, from Dr. Watts, in the beginning of the 18th Cent. down to the authors at Newark, Ohio, in 1816.

* "What books are those," said the persecutor, Saturninus, "which you read and revere?" Speratus replied,—All the scripture that is inspired of God."‡ They martyrs then revered the Psalms of David.

‡ Milner † Latta, p. 42. § Ibid. p. 51. † Ibid. p. 77.

‡ Freeman, p. 15. †† Baird, p. 84.

patiently listen to those slanders, by which it is misrepresented. Yet, indelicate, and—can you find a softer epithet than impious?—if you can, use it, and I return, and repeat—*indelicate* as are these rhapsodies, they enter into the special pleadings, by which Dr. Watts introduced to notice his productions, and, by which, the friends of his scheme have supported it.

Yes, Dr. Watts, with all the imposing forms of his sanctity, spoke as we have heard of his own and of inspired compositions. With his piety I have nothing to do. I hope it will be found, that he was really devout, and, that like others of the redeemed, he, through the blood of the cross, was pardoned and accepted, by that God, of whose word he so lightly spoke. Most willingly would I seek an apology for his modesty, and his reverence of God. But where is it to be found? Shall we have recourse to bodily infirmities, or, to that mental derangement, from which so few partakers of frail humanity are exempt? In that state of intellect, in which a man can persuade himself, that he is metamorphosed into a tea pot, he may, perhaps, innocently imagine, that the

compositions of his pen are more divinely excellent, than those of inspired prophets. But while this admission of charity shields his motives, it condemns the madness of his project. I cannot, however, be persuaded to extend the admission so far as to allow, that those multitudes who have entered into the views of the good doctor, were equally under the influence of hypochondrical affections. And, if they were, would it not be accommodating their caprice too far, to indulge them, without animadversion, to banish from her solemn praise, the inspired hymns of Zion ?

Are you prepared to admit, that, "if we adhere to the Book of Psalms, we cannot be said *to do any thing* in the name of the Redeemer" ? Did, then, a strict adherence to the doctrines of this book, which so abundantly testifies of Christ, lead the worshipper to an absolute God—a consuming fire ? Was not Messiah, since the fall of man, the only way to the Father ? *Call now if there be any that will answer thee, and to which of the saints wilt thou turn ?** Who of them was ever, in person, or in worship, accepted through any name, but that

* Job, 5. 1.

Christ ?* Did they not, under every economy, contemplate him as *wounded for their transgressions* ? In their sacrificed victims, devout worshippers, by faith, beheld *Messiah*, the Christ, *cut off, but not for himself.*†

It is remarkable, with what front these writers could, in various forms, repeat, that “there is no distinct mention of the Father, in the Book of Psalms, as a distinct and special object of devotion.” Had an aversion to this Book prevented them from reading the second Psalm ? Who is it that says, *Thou art my Son* ? And to whom is the address made ? Yes, yes ; the doctrine of the Trinity was well known, to the approved worshippers of God from the first, and is very distinctly exhibited in many a psalm.‡ And, was, as these advocates say, “the Son as the way to the Father, unknown to the ancient saints” ? We hope the time is rapidly passing away, when such things shall be believed. Enoch, a contemporary with Adam, prophesied of the Savior||—Abraham saw his day, and was glad||—Job spoke of his Redeemer, whom he knew,

* Act. 4. 12. † Isa. 53. 5. Dan. 9. 26. Ps. 40. 6. 7.

‡ See Ps. 2d, 8th, 45th, 51, 110. &c. || Jude, 14.

¶ John, 8. 56.

with the precision of a New Testament writer*—Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches, than the treasures of Egypt†—David describes him, in his sufferings, in his exaltation, and in his dispensations, in these divine songs,‡ which, I fear, an unhappy prejudice has prevented some masters in our Israel from understanding. And yet, wonderful to tell, these saints knew nothing of this personage, as the way to the Father! Did these writers understand that Confession which they subscribed, and were they sincere when they professed to believe its articles, and vowed to teach its doctrines? This document teaches, that “The justification of believers *under the Old Testament* was, in all respects, one and the same with the justification of believers under the *New Testament*.”|| This symbol, in the same chapter, teaches, that “Faith, receiving and resting upon Christ and his righteousness, is the *alone* instrument of justification.” But, when a point is to be gained, subscriptions, vows, consistency, and truth, all in unison, oppose, too frequently,

* Job. 19. 25—27. † Heb. 11. 26. ‡ Psal. 68. 22. 110. 118.
&c. || Conf. of the Presby. Church, Chap. XI.

but a feeble obstacle to the aroused passions of imperfect man.

How bitterly it is to be lamented, that ministers of the word of God, should vituperate a most interesting portion of that word! Holding it forth, as *depriving the Son of God of divine honor—directly tending to make heresy triumphant—as favorable to Arianism, and as properly suited to such a perversion of truth!* By such vituperation, the imitation, and hymns of Watts, have been forced upon the unwary; and, so far as a defence of the usurpation is undertaken, it is made by the same weapons. Say, ye who fear God, and tremble at his word, is not the cause a *desperate* one, that—I shall not say requires, but, that *tolerates*, such support? To be told all this, to hear it repeated, and to see it presented in varied forms, by men occupying the place of ministers in the Church of the Lord, and eulogized by others, and remain unmoved, would argue a species of apathy, by which no virtuous mind should wish to be characterized. If from another quarter, it would call forth a well tempered indignation; as it is, grief takes the place of in-

dignation, and expresses itself in the tears of affliction.

These sentiments, indeed, appear to carry us so far beyond the regions, where mistaken saints are wont to stray, that, when I read them, I imagine myself on the confines of infidelity. *Has "The age of reason" spoken more reproachfully of the Book of Psalms, than these writings, which I now review?* The opinions are so often repeated, turned up in so many forms, and appear in so many connexions, that we are forbidden to ascribe them to a *lapsus calami*, an oversight in composition. Is not their tendency to corrupt the mind, and shake the public faith, in the inspired page. If, indeed, any portion of the Book of Psalms have such tendencies, as have been ascribed to it, ought it not to be torn from our Bibles, and excluded from our churches? Tell me, is it not dangerous to *read*, as well as to *sing*, those portions of scripture, that "darken our sight of God the Savior?—that tend to give heresy a triumph, and that were *properly suited* to a perversion of truth"? Was it well done to *imitate* such a book? If the original be so dangerous, can the *imitation* be safe? By what rule

shall we know those portions of the *word of God*, that have such evil tendency, from those parts that are still profitable? And how account for the fatal omission, of the great Prophet of the Church, and of his inspired messengers, in never hinting to us these dangers from the use of the Book of Psalms? These perplexing questions croud upon us—They should have been obviated by those *Evangelical illuminati*, who have cast such a shade of doubt on this venerable Book, which prophets composed, which apostles admired, and which saints in every age have most devoutly sung.

That such sentiments were indulged, among any of the professed disciples of christianity, even in the heat of angry controversy, can be accounted for, only by the fact already mentioned: the progress of infidelity. The period, when the opinions of Watts were broached, was the age in which the publications of Herbert, Shaftsbury, and Bolingbroke, came abroad, recommended by the fascinations of wit, of eloquence, and a pretension to lofty thought. From causes already mentioned, it was the age, too, of extinguished zeal, and lit-

the scriptural religion. The floodgates of infidelity were raised, the torrent increased, and, in its impetuous course, carried public opinion along. Its deadly waters washed our shores. Untaught to confide in ourselves, and to draw upon our own resources, we depended as much on Europe, for the opinions we should entertain, as for the robes we should wear. Political revolutions unsettle the public mind, lead to connexions unknown before, and afford facilities for the active apostles of error, to accomplish their designs. The history of our times, and of our country, amply verifies this remark.

When the controversy of which we now treat, was first agitated in this country, the imposing port assumed by infidelity, may be well remembered, while as a monster it stalked our streets. That was "The age of Reason."—The public ear was familiarized to the supposed contradictions of the word of God.—But now, that these tumultuous waters are assuaged, that the reign of infidelity has ended, and that we live in the age of Bibles, when every one seems ready to atone for the wanderings of other years, I cannot persuade myself that,

upon serious reflexion, the real friend of the Word of God, will suffer any portion of it to remain under the unblessed charge, of "checking us in our ascent to heaven—darkening our views of God the Savior, or of directly tending to make heresy triumphant" ! Let them, then—it is devoutly hoped they will—restore the Book of Psalms, to its legitimate place, in the solemnities of the sanctuary. While such declarations, as those we have noticed, stand prominently on record against this sacred Book, let us not give it up, *lest we be understood to give them the sanction of our approbation.*—Let it be retained where it is, and be brought back where it is not, till something more satisfactory, than animated declamation, shall be adduced against it ; and, till the Spirit of inspiration, in his future efforts, shall have surpassed, in excellence, what he has already done.

To induce to this, at the present day, it is not necessary to dilate on the testimony of New Testament writers, in favor of the evangelical character of the Book of Psalms. A reference to what has already been said, is deemed sufficient ; And, were human authority deem-

ed requisite, we might produce that of the whole Church of God in former times ; for, in no age of her existence, except that of INFIDEL REASON, did any of her sons venture to speak in the style on which we have animadverted. The testimony of a few moderns of reputation, from among many others, no less respectable, may not be deemed impertinent.

The first I adduce, is that of the late Dr. Horne. "David's Invaluable Psalms," says he, convey those comforts to others which they afforded to himself.—They present religion to us in the most engaging dress ; communicating truths to us which philosophy could never investigate, in a style which poetry can never equal.—Indited under the influence of Him, to whom all hearts are known, and all events foreknown, they suit mankind in all situations—He who hath once tasted their excellencies will desire to taste them again, and he who tastes them oftenest will relish them best."* Much more hath the Dr. finely spoken to the same purpose.

My next witness is Dr. Scott, a man who feels, as well as writes of, "the force of truth."

* Pref. to his Comment.

“There is nothing,” says this excellent man, “in true religion, doctrinal, experimental and practical, but will present itself to our attention while we meditate upon the Psalms.—And hardly an occasion of praise and thanksgiving can be conceived, to which some portion of them, *faithfully* rendered in poetical versions, may not be applied with peculiar energy and propriety: and indeed the christian’s use of them in the closet, and the minister’s in the pulpit, will generally increase with the *growing experience of the power of true religion in their own hearts.*”*

I next adduce the sentiments of the Rev. Robert Davidson, D. D. late professor in, and for a time at the head of, Dickinson College. He was a reputable minister of the Presbyterian Church. “Do christians,” inquires the Dr. “feel it their duty to celebrate the attributes of the adorable Jehovah, and to praise him for his wonderful works of creation, providence, and redemption? Do they delight to dwell on the precious promises of God to men,—especially the promises of life and salvation through a Redeemer?—do they wish to repeat

* Scott’s Pref. to the Psalms.

hymns, that express in a lively manner, all the various affections of a pious mind, in all the different circumstances of life,—in scenes of trouble and in scenes of joy? What can be better adapted to all these purposes than the book of psalms,—the production of the pens of inspired prophets of ancient times? Had the author been disposed to omit any of this most valuable collection, he would not have known where to begin.”* But quotations of this description would be endless.†

It is cheering to find men of solid erudition, of refined taste, and deep toned piety, in different countries, and of different communities, unite in asserting the excellence of this portion of the sacred volume, which novices in literature and godly experience, affect to despise. And whether these sentiments of

* Pref. to his version of the Psalms.

† “Of all the books of the Old Testament the book of psalms is the most universally, but, I fear as little as any understood. This cannot be ascribed to any extraordinary obscurity of these sacred songs, for of all the prophetic parts of the scriptures they are certainly the most perspicuous. But it is owing partly, I fear, to some *dullness* of the faculties of the natural man upon *spiritual subjects*.—There is not a page of this Book of Psalms in which the *pious reader will not find his Savior, if he reads with a view of finding him*; and it was but a just encomium of it that came from the pen of one of the early Fathers, that it is a complete system of divinity for the use and edification of the common people of the Christian Church.”

Bp. Horsley's Pref.

a. Home, of a Horseley, of a Scott, of a Davidson, and others of a similar cast; or those of Watts, Latta, and their coadjutors, exhibit most of the spirit of enlightened devotion, may be safely left to the friends of the Bible to decide.

But before leaving this subject, a word of apology may be deemed necessary, for dragging the foibles of eminent men to light, and disturbing the ashes of the dead, by exposing their mistakes before the world. I can reply to suggestions of this kind with sincerity, that it is not the pleasure derived from such exposure, that induces to the attempt. When accompanied with no evil consequence, I cheerfully recognize the obligation of the adage; *De mortuis nihil, nisi bonum*.* The obligation to a similar delicacy, toward the living, is as readily confessed. But if the dead, by their works, continue to vitiate the purity of divine worship, and to disturb the peace of the Church of God, let them bear the blame. And if, by the ill advised kindness of surviving friends, those men and their works, be dragged from their obscurities, and be obtru-

* Speak no evil of the dead.

ded on public attention, let the forfeiture be paid by those officious friends.*

Those men, on whose sentiments I have animadverted, succeeded by their compositions, in excluding the songs of inspiration, from the psalmody of the Church. It is my wish those songs should be restored. I am therefore justifiable in calling public attention to those reasons, that recommended a measure which I believe to be improper, and in exposing that impious banter, which, in an age of infidelity was too successful, in effecting a practical preference of the word of man; to that of God. I trust my attempt shall not be in vain. My

* After reading Dr. Latta's discourse on Psalmody, and not a little surprised at its sentiments and reasoning, upon turning to the Christian's Magazine, my surprise was accompanied by pain to find that the learned and orthodox editors of that respectable work, devoted their pages to eulogize that gentleman, not only as a man, and a scholar, but as a divine; and, as if to make it more conspicuous, in a marginal note, to adduce his "Discourse on psalmody," as a specimen of his talent in justification of their eulogy. No less painful is it to find such a work receive the high commendation, of such a man as the learned and excellent Professor at Princeton, in his life of Dr. Rodgers. It is hoped none of those gentlemen were really acquainted with the true character of that work; but resting upon what they considered the character of their friend, unwittingly transferred the reputation of the man to his book. But those works shall outlive them; and as it is now, so when they shall be no more inhabitants of our world, their testimony will be employed to give currency to the very exceptionable pages of that discourse; pages containing sentiments from which their whole souls, I trust, would revolt. To correct the evil is a duty they owe to themselves, to the church of God, and to the cause of truth.

appeal is made to christian consistency, and it is made in a day, as remarkable for liberal exertions to circulate the word of God, as a late period was, for undisguised opposition to the authenticity, and divine inspiration of that blessed book.

Will not, then, the genuine friend of the bible arise, and in manly, in evangelical, consistency, declare to the world, and to the Church of God, that he does not believe any portion of the *lively oracles* of the God of truth, "has a tendency to make heresy triumphant, or, that it checks us in our ascent toward heaven, throws the vail of Moses over our hearts, darkens our sight of God the Savior, and is opposite to the spirit of the gospel." It is time to awake from the slumber of a mere accommodating policy, and to tell the world, these are opinions you do not hold. Convince us, then, that you are sincere. Recall the Book of Psalms from its exile, and restore to it its pristine honors. This will be an act of magnanimous policy, worthy the age of Bibles ; an act which the Spirit of God will approve ; and in which the Church on earth, and saints in heaven will rejoice.

THE EVIL CONSEQUENCES OF SUPPLYING THE PLACE OF SCRIPTURE PSALMS, WITH HUMAN COMPOSITIONS, furnishes a sixth reason against it. I am forbidden by my prescribed limits, to expand the subject much farther. It requires, however, but little reflexion to perceive the danger. The consequences are indeed extensively felt, and, if the practice be continued, they have not yet reached their bounds.

The Book of Psalms has been undervalued. A language, better fitting the lips of deists than of christians, has been countenanced; and the Church of the Redeemer, rent enough before, has been still more divided by the measure now opposed. The preference of a human, to divine Book of Psalms, has led to the maintenance of opinions respecting the dispensation and exercise of grace, under the old Testament, totally at variance with truth, and contradictory to the public standards of the reformation churches. It has forced the advocates of that preference, to assume a position, that deprives the Church of God at large of his word, as the ground of faith, except those of her members who may be learned in the ori-

ginal tongues, in which the scriptures were first written. For, if as faithful a version of the bible, as can be obtained, has no claim to be called the Word of God, as some suppose, then the faith of the great majority of saints, in every age, has been built on a sandy foundation, the word of man. And, finally, the measure opens wide the door for introducing, and propagating every species of heresy.

The fact, that hymns of human composition, admitted into the Psalmody of the Church, tend to the corruption of religion, is scarcely deniable. Admit them once, where shall we stop? Every fanciful scribbler who may be permitted to ascend a pulpit, and whose inflated vanity induces the belief, that he is a poet, will urge the use of his hymns, "the spontaneous effusions of his affections," composed, as he may imagine, in adaptation to his discourse. Then, instead of a few females, on a particular day, like *Paulus of Samosata*, he may hear the whole choir, from day to day, sing his, in place of the praises of God.

Examine the hymn books of the respective communities, which have laid aside the Bible Psalms, and you will find their peculiar tenets

interwoven with their song. According to present sentiments and practice, it is, generally, in the power of every minister to adopt into his congregation, what hymn books he may deem meet. And thus employ, if unsound in principle, a powerful mean of seduction from the path of truth. With what heart, with what kind of faith, can the worshipper, in such a state of things, enter the house of God? At this day, in many Churches, there is no certainty, in what collection your song of praise shall be found: whether it shall be strictly Calvinistic in sentiment, or replete with all the horrors, and all the nonsense, of the high toned Hopkinsian school; whether, in it, these shall be qualified by an admixture of more truth, or whether it shall be a mere evanescent effusion, depends on circumstances the most uncertain, to the majority of worshippers. This is an unhappy state of things; for it a remedy should be speedily sought.

It would be worth while to spend some labor, to ascertain what has been actually done in this way, to corrupt religious opinion. The inquirer should go back to a date more ancient than the present age. As respects our

own country, it is peculiarly interesting. It has been said, that "the city of God presented no street of purer gold than the New England Church." It is now a desolation. The rude howlings of the worst of heresy, is the music at its head. *How is the gold become dim!* Had the sentiments of Dr. Watts, on the doctrine of the Trinity, and his unhallowed language respecting the Book of Psalms, any influence in opening the door for Socinianism? The Dr's system was a compound of Sabellianism, Arianism, and Socinianism. His system not only denies the *eternal sonship* of Jesus Christ, but also his deity, as he is a person distinct from the Father. The acute and profound President Edwards has, in a number of arguments, refuted this heresy of Dr. Watts, and, at the same time, shown, that it destroys a belief in the scriptural doctrine of the Trinity. According to Watts' hypothesis, it is a trinity of names, united in one individual person, and not of persons in one essence.*

Did Dr. Watts attempt, directly, or indirectly, to transfuse his peculiar views, on this subject, into his religious poetry? Some

* See Appendix, No. 1.

think he introduced it, not very indirectly, into his *imitation* of the Psalms. Considering the strong propensity of man to propagate his sentiments, it would, indeed, be strange, if he did not attempt it. It is a fact, not admitting of doubt, that where his compositions were first, and have been longest used, in the Psalmody of the Church, Socinianism has made the most extensive progress. Error has its power as well as truth, and like it, it presses to consistency. Dr. Watts rejected the bible doctrine of the Trinity; he cannot be supposed, intentionally, to contradict his settled principles, in any of his poetic compositions; his imitation and hymns, with all their perfections and imperfections, were adopted in the psalmody of many Churches, to the exclusion of scripture songs; among those Churches the Socinian heresies have extensively spread.—What is the connexion, in New England, between these composures of Dr. Watts, and the existing opposition to orthodox doctrine? I leave this question to be answered by them, whom it more immediately concerns. Whatever others may imagine, to me, it seems de-

serving of attention.* God once said of F
phraim, *He is joined to his idols let him*
In avenging sin, he frequently p
itual crime with spiritual plagues. *My people*
would not hearken to my voice ; and Israel would
none of me. So I gavethem up to their own hearts'
lusts ; and they walked in their own counsels.†

These, brethren, are a summary of the rea-
sons, by which I justify the continued use
of inspired songs, in the Psalmody of the
Church, in preference to human composures
however excellent. We have seen that they
were given to the Church of God, by his own

* The progress of error is gradual, and often the avowed
friends of truth prepare the way for heresy. The present ex-
tensive denial of the *eternal Sonship* of Jesus Christ, is to be
viewed in this light. Destroy the faith of the church in the
eternity of his filiation, and she will soon deny the eternity of
his person. The metaphysical acumen of most professors, will
not enable them to distinguish between *sonship* and *personality*.
The standards of the Presbyterian churches teach, that " the
Son is eternally begotten of the Father," and that the *personal*
property of the Son is to be begotten of the Father. Destroy
the *personal property* and you destroy the *person*. If the per-
sonal property be not eternal, the person is not eternal. Estab-
lish the former, and the latter will follow of course. To bear
down the doctrine of the Savior's *eternal filiation*, the weight of
the influence at Andover is directed. The names of Drs.
Morse, Emmons, and Griffin, stand conspicuously recorded,
as avowed enemies of the truth, on this point. They mean not
to deny the divinity of their Redeemer ; yet their principle
leads that way, and, we have reason to fear, their disciples will
be more consistently wrong than themselves. See their re-
commendation of a work of Rev'd Ethan Smith of Hopkin-
ton, N. H. on the character of Jesus Christ, and the Trinity..

† Psal. 81. 11. 12.

authority, and were used with his approbation.
 to the Redeemer and his inspired messengers,
 the strong ~~sentiment~~ advocating their use, did by numer-
 ous circumstances, whose language is not ea-
 sily misunderstood, recommend them to our
 respect, and pious veneration.—The matter of
 these songs is divine, and admirably adapted
 to the purpose of evangelical praise—They
 are better than the best compositions of unin-
 spired men; they are the word of God,—and
 have been always dear to the saints—The
 propriety of using hymns of human compo-
 sure, in the sanctuary of God, to say the least,
 is doubtful. The most prominent advocates
 of such hymns, in recommending them, and
 in vindicating their claims, have spoken re-
 proachfully of an important portion of the sa-
 cred Word—The tendency of their admis-
 sion, too, is most unpropitious to the purity of
 religion, and the peace of the house of God.

LETTER V.

OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

Scripture our only rule. Col. 3. 16. considered. Demands answered. New mercies require a new song. Book of Psalms abrogated. Cannot be sung in truth. May sing as well as pray in our own words. Book of Psalms obscure. Inadequate. Modern hymns more favorable to revivals. More elegant in diction. Watts had as good a right to make Psalms as David.

Dear Brethren,

THAT “The scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, are the *only rule* to direct us how we may glorify God, and enjoy him for ever,” is an article of the Protestant creed.— In matters of faith and religious worship, *to the law and to the testimony*, our appeal is made. By the decision of the Holy Ghost, speaking in and by the scriptures, is the claim of the Book of Psalms sustained, to its place in the Psalmody of our Zion. This is enough; it matters little what ingenuity may be displayed in order to set aside that decision; upon it the faith of the christian should repose. Those who contend for its banishment, and the adoption of its rivals, can be justified only by “passages of scripture which contain direct *pre-*

cept, plain undoubted *example*, or at least some established *principle*, from which their conclusion necessarily flows—we cannot be contented with gratuitous assumptions, or ingenious analogies, which have nothing to support them but human authority. We must have a warrant decided and clear; a warrant which would be *indubitable* and *satisfactory*, if all books, excepting the Bible, were banished from the Church.”† Such is the demand, such are the sentiments of a fine writer, when contending against the claims of Episcopacy. I adopt them as mine, when contending against the substitution of a human, for an inspired system of religious songs. And I shall be satisfied with an express command of God, with an approved example, or with a conclusion which necessarily flows from an established principle, authorizing such substitution. But with less, no well directed conscience can rest.—Sophistry however acute, and pretension however arrogant, will not be satisfactory.*

† *Miller's Letters*.

* It is affirmed, that in Col III: 16, and in the parallel scriptures, we have indubitable evidence of the divine right of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, of human composure: *the word of Christ*, that is, according to a very large exposition, the gospel, or writings of the New Testament, exclusively, must

Whether a human system of psalms has a higher claim than these can give, is now the subject of inquiry.

The following very extraordinary demands are made of the friends of scripture Psalms in the church's worship; and it seems to be admitted, that, if these demands were satisfied,

dwelt in us richly, and that with a reference to our mutual improvement, which is effected, by teaching one another, in the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; which compositions, not being found in the old, must be drawn from, and formed according to the doctrines of the gospel, found in the New Testament; for there *alone, the word of Christ*, which is to constitute the great matter of these compositions, is to be found, being expressly distinguished by the Apostle, in writing to the Hebrews, from all former revelations.†

To these assertions I make the following replies; and you will justify me in remarking, in the first place, that it is not true that the "word of Christ" or the gospel, is confined, *exclusively*, to the writings of the New Testament. One who well understood what the *gospel* was, informs us, that it was preached unto Abraham‡; and, that, to the Antediluvians, the righteousness of faith, of which Noah was both an heir and a preacher, was made known; to them Christ by his Spirit preached in the day of forbearance, though now they occupy the place of imprisoned spirits.§ If the Spirit of Christ preached to them, one would reasonably conclude, they enjoyed the revelation of *the word of Christ*. We are also certified, that the gospel was preached to the Israelites in the wilderness.—*Unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them*|| How could these writers presume to assert, that "where the Apostle writes immediately to the Jews themselves, he *expressly* distinguishes *the word of Christ* from all former revelations, made by Moses and the prophets"—"distinguishes the gospel from *all* the revelations of the divine will in the old testament,"—when that Apostle informs those very people, and in that same epistle, that the gospel, in "the revelation of the divine will, in the old testament," was preached to their fathers? May not a suspicion,

† See Latta, p. 19—23. *et alibi*. ‡ Gal. 3. 8.

§ Heb. 11. 7. and 1 Pet. 3. 18—20. 2 Pet. 2. 5. || Heb. 4. 2.

the claims of inspired songs would be at least probable. We shall hear the demands, examine them with candor, and satisfy them if possible.

To maintain, it is said, the claim of the scripture psalms, it should be shewn, that the *word of Christ*, of which the Apostle speaks, Col.

without illiberality, exist, that men, who write and talk at this rate, are novices in the knowledge of what the gospel is? But, in every age of the Church, teachers have been found, *understanding neither what they said, nor whereof they affirmed.*

My second remark is this; it is gratuitous to assert, that in the Old Testament scriptures, *psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs*, are not to be found. This is a pitiful play on words.—A little more sense on the part of some, and a little more modesty on that of others, teaching them not to presume too far on human ignorance, would induce them to be ashamed of such paltry tricks. See a following note on this subject.—

My third remark is on the text, Col. 3. 16. It appears to be both misunderstood and misapplied. Duties highly important, and the manner of performing them, are enjoined. They are three: An intimate and extensive acquaintance with the doctrine of Christ; *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly*—Wisely promoting each others edification; *In all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another*—Praising God, with proper dispositions of heart, in the use of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; *In psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your heart to the Lord.* The celebration of the divine perfections, in suitable songs, wisely teaching and admonishing one another, are duties demanded by God; and, that to discharge these duties aright, requires an extensive acquaintance with the inspired page, our Apostle teaches, and the christian readily acknowledges; but the scripture under consideration, neither requires the members of the church to commence *hymn makers*, nor authorizes the use of such, in the church, when made. Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, are, indeed, to be sung; but whether these must be inspired, or may be uninspired, whether from the old, or from the new testament, we must elsewhere learn. On these points, this text is silent. The attempt to justify the expulsion of the book of psalms, and the introduction of uninspired hymns,

3. 16. was so peculiarly restricted to the Psalms of David, as to exclude from being any part of that word, what was spoken by himself, and his Apostles ;—that it is usual for the Apostle Paul to call the psalms of David, *psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs* ;—that our instructions, in these psalms and hymns, should be drawn, not from the discourses of the Savior and his Apostles ; but from the old testament psalms ;—and that the whole worship of the old testament, songs of praise included, was expressly offered up to the Father, through Christ. But these things can never be proved. The very reverse of them is the truth.†

Such are the bulwarks, by which the enemies of our sacred songs defend themselves.

from these injunctions of the sacred writer, argues a remarkable perversity of intellect, not excused, even by the unhappy punctuation of our version. I have said unhappy punctuation ; for “through bad pointing this verse is not very intelligible ; the several members of it should be distinguished thus: *Let the doctrine of Christ dwell richly among you ; teaching and admonishing each other in all wisdom ; singing, with grace in your hearts unto the Lord, in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs* — This arrangement the original will not only bear ; but it absolutely requires it, and is not sense without it.”* Still, it must be seen, that no pointing, however bad, can give any countenance to a human, in preference to an inspired system of psalms.—Whether the argument upon which I have animadverted, merits a better character than “gratuitous assumption” I leave to my reader to decide.

* Vide Dr. Clarke’s note on the place.

† Latta’s Discourse, Pref. Page, 6. 7.

To the first of the above demands, I reply ; that the restriction of the *word of Christ*, exclusively, to any part of divine revelation, is no article of our creed. As the Redeemer is the prophet and teacher of his Church, and the light of the World, we consider the whole discovery of the divine will to man, to be made by him.* *The Spirit of the Lord spake by me*,† said the inspired minstrel of Israel, when about to leave the sanctuary below, and join in the song of the Church of the first born above. *The Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of David*,‡ says an Apostle of Jesus. The Holy Ghost who spoke by David and other inspired messengers of old, was the Spirit of Christ—*The Spirit of Christ which was in them—testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.*|| He who dictated the whole canon of scripture, is the Spirit of Christ ; and the sacred volume is the Savior's word. The inspiring Spirit dwelt in the Church's Head, he actuated the prophets, he inspired the Apostles ; in all its ages, he acted under the economy of grace ; at the head of that economy, in those ages, stood the Son of

* Joh. 1. 18. † 2 Sam. 23. 2. ‡ Act. 1. 16. || Pet. 1. 11.

God, as our Mediator; his is the revelation in our Bible. *It is the word of Christ.* Let all who deny this take their future stand, at least with the semi-infidels of our day, and, on that ground, they shall be met. The songs of scripture, whether found in the Old, or in the New Testament, are the word of Christ.*

I reply to the second demand; that it is fair in us, if *psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs*, be really found in the Bible, to conclude, that the Apostle intended them, rather than the imperfect effusions of well designing men. Now, let the objectors tell us the specific qualities by which these compositions are distinguished, and we shall present them with specimens of each, in the Book of Psalms. Or, if they please, a reference to the original denominations of these songs, might probably afford satisfactory information†. It is not pleas-

* That the above should be denied by any who have subscribed the following declaration, which every minister of the Presbyterian Church has done, is only another, yet lamentable instance of the inconsistency of man: "Christ executeth the office of a prophet, in his revealing to the church, in all ages, by his Spirit and word, in divers ways of administration, the whole will of God"†—This supports what I have advanced, while it contradicts that on which I animadvert.

† Larg. Cat. Q. 43.

‡ *Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.* Rarely has it been found, that writers have presumed more on the ignorance and credulity of their readers, than in the confidence with which it

ant to call arguments, of the description now under consideration, by an appropriate name.

The reply, to the third requisition in the objection—requiring us to show, “that our instructions; in these songs, should be drawn, exclusively, from the old testament Psalms”—is, in part, anticipated. I only remark further; that the whole word of God is profitable; the more extensive and correct our acquaintance with it is, the better will we be furnished for every good work. Let the *word of Christ*; whether found in the one testament, or in the other, dwell richly in us, and our teaching and admonitions will be better directed, and of

is assumed, that, when the scripture makes mention of *hymns and spiritual songs*, human composures, and not those of divine inspiration, must be intended. These teachers should have shewn, that, among the songs of the Bible, none corresponding to the denomination of *hymns*, and *spiritual songs*, could be found. A more summary mode has been adopted; simple assertion, which, if not so satisfactory, is undoubtedly more easy.

Although, in the exposition of these terms, among reputable writers, there are some faint shades of difference; yet all unite in opposition to the idea, that a *hymn*, and *spiritual song*, must mean uninspired compositions. It may be gratifying to my reader to have the sentiments of a few characters, of literary reputation, on the subject.

Hear, in the first place, the sentiments of Calvin. “*A psalm*, says he, is that species of composition, in the singing of which, a musical instrument besides the tongue was employed:—*Hymns* are songs of praise, sung either with a voice elevated or low. *Spiritual songs*, are such *psalms* as contain, not only praises, but also exhortations, and other arguments.”

* Comment. on the Epistles, p. 708.

course more efficient; and the better will we be qualified, too, to sing with the understanding. Were the men, who employ this style of objection, better acquainted with the lessons of the inspired volume, we should not hear from them language so very unguarded.

To the fourth demand I answer, that the *whole worship* of the Church of God, since the revelation of the first promise of mercy to man,

Mr. Brown, of Haddington, says, "When *psalms*, *hymns*, and *spiritual songs*, are mentioned together, *psalms* may denote such as were sung on instruments; *hymns* such as contain only matter of praise; and *spiritual songs*, such as contain doctrines, history, and prophecy, for men's instruction."

Dr. Lowth observes, that the Greek translators might very properly have given the title of HYMNS to the Book of Psalms, as that word agrees much more exactly with the Hebrew title *TEHILLIM*, than that which they have adopted.*† As specimens of the *Idyllium* or *hymn* of the Hebrew poetry, he selects, Psalms, 78th, 104th, 135th, 106th, 107th, 136th, and 139th.— On the Hebrew word, *SHIR*, and the Greek word *ODE*, the Dr. also remarks; "both these words have exactly the same power and signification." *ODE*, which we render by the word *song*, is that employed by the Apostle, Col. 3. 16. As specimens of the Hebrew *ode* or *song*, he refers to psalms 2, 3, 77, 91, 133, and others. In the *TEHILLIM* and *SHIRIM* of the Hebrews, Dr. Lowth could readily find the *hymn* and *song*, though men of more noisy pretensions, could discover neither the one nor the other.

Dr. Blair when treating of the different denominations of *odes*, observes, "First, sacred odes; *hymns* addressed to God, or composed on religious subjects. Of this nature are the *Psalms of David*, which exhibit to us this species of lyric poetry, in its highest degree of perfection."† Again, says he, "Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, were the chief directors of the music; and from the titles of some psalms, it would appear

* Dict. of the Bible. † Lectures on Sacred Poetry, p. 402.

‡ Lect. on Rhet. vol. 2, p. 272.

has been conducted through the *mediation* of Jesus Christ. The Church of God, in every age, is *one*; the covenant of grace is *one*; the Mediator is *one*; and to the church of old he was as *really* revealed, as he is to the church at this day; and was, by her believing members, as really confided in for salvation, as by the saints of New Testament times. The object of worship has always been the same, and the great medium of access, the Son of God, as Redeemer, has likewise been the same.—*There is not salvation in any other.* How, then, can it be denied that the “Old Testa-

that they were also eminent composers of *hymns* or *sacred poems*.”¶ He further says—“The sacred poetry is distinguished by the highest beauties of strong, concise, bold, and figurative expression”—To disrelish its imagery is indeed “the effect of false delicacy.”—“The style of the poetical books of the *Old Testament* is, beyond the style of all other poetical works, fervid, bold, and animated.—It is the burst of inspiration.—The whole Book of Psalms is to be considered as a collection of sacred odes.”||

May not the Hebrew distinction, of the sacred songs, correspond with *psalms*, *hymns*, and *spiritual songs*? *TEHILIM*, *praises*—The title of the Book of Psalms, which, as Dr. Lowth observes, might be properly translated *HYMNS*. *MISMORIM*, *poems*; “A poem is called in Hebrew, *Mizmor*,—It is thus called in reference to the verse and number.”* *SHIRIM* *songs*. Here are Hebrew denominations of the sacred poetry, exactly corresponding to the *hymns*, *poems*, or *psalms* and *songs*, of the New Testament. Why they are designated *spiritual*, is easy to know from their contents, the subject matter is spiritual; the glory and works of God, the graces and exercises of the soul. But on this subject, among men of sense, whose minds are superior to the littleness of a trick, there is no dispute.

¶ P. 209. || Do. p. 302—311. * Lowth.

ment worship was conducted in the name of the Lord Jesus"—or, in truth be said—"the very reverse appears to be the truth"—and then assert—"the Old Testament Church had no access to God, but through priests and sacrifices."* With the same degree of truth, may it be said, that the New Testament Church has no access to God, but through ministers, and sacraments, &c. The ordinances of worship, under the old and new dispensations, are, indeed, not precisely the same; but whatever the rites of worship were, or now are, the *medium* of acceptance has been, and will ever be, the same. This was not unknown to the Israelitish saint. He was taught, that *sacrifice and offering* God did *not desire*; these were at all times shown, to be inadequate to the display of Jehovah's grace and glory—The pious Jew understood his Savior's voice, when he proclaimed, *Lo! I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God* || †

* Latta, Pref. p. 7. || Psal. 40. 6. 7. 8. Heb. 10. 5—9.

† Hear, on this subject, the language and doctrine of all the Presbyterian churches, "Religious worship is to be given to God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost;—and, since the fall, not without a Mediator; nor in the mediation of any other, but of Christ alone."¶ Those who subscribe this "form of sound

¶ Conf. of faith, Chap. 21. 2.

Whether or not the sentiments couched in, and expressed by, the language of the objection, be worthy of christian regard, I leave to the christian to decide; confident in the mean time, that, in the moment of serious reflexion, he will not contend, that the *word of Christ*, is, exclusively, restricted to the writings of the New Testament; that *Psalms*, and *Hymns*, and *Spiritual Songs*, are not to be found in the volume of inspiration; that the Apostle enjoins it on *all*, or on *any*, of the members of the Church, to commence hymn makers for her public worship; or, that there was some other way of access to God, for Old Testament saints, than by his Son, as Mediator.* Argu-

words" ought to understand it, and understanding it, they ought not to contradict it. The attempt to puzzle, for a moment, an opponent will not justify us in teaching, that there has been, for sinners, a way of access to God, besides Jesus Christ; and, more especially, when it is considered, that such doctrine contradicts, in no very courtly manner, both the express word of God, and the symbol to which we have pledged our vow.

* Before I dismiss this subject, I would, once more, call the reader's attention to this point, on which, the advocates of our *little hymn books*, expend no small portion of their breath; it is thus expressed by Mr Freeman: "There is no psalm of David, in which we are directed to approach God in the duty of praise and thanksgiving, for the peculiar blessings of the gospel, in the name of Jesus Christ."† What are the *peculiar blessings* of the gospel? Are they not the redemption of the soul, a new heart, pardon of sin, communion with God, and assurance of a blessed immortality? He must indeed be very slightly ac-

† Freeman's Discourse, p. 6, and Latta's Pref. p. 7.

ments of the following description, cover the pages of the opposers of our Bible songs :—

Under every dispensation of God, new favors have demanded and obtained a new song of praise ; as in the case of Israel at the red sea ; that of Deborah and Barak, of David and the prophets under the Old Testament ; and, under the New Testament, the instances of Zecharias, Elizabeth, Mary, Simeon, and Anna, are all in point. The special providences which passed over them, authorized a special song. We must follow their examples, or be

acquainted with the Book of Psalms, who cannot find these subjects in its pages. It may be worth while to ask some of our friends, who chime so frequently and so long, on the words, "*offering praise in the name of Christ*," what they precisely intend by the expression. Is it, that, from a sense of our unworthiness, and out of gratitude to God for all his benefits, we approach his throne through the mediation of the Savior ; and viewing that Savior, as placed at the head of the economy of salvation, out of regard to his authority, receive and observe his institutions ; thus exercising, in all our deportment, a habitual reliance upon him for acceptance, before the Father, as he sustains the claims of the Godhead ? Views, and exercises such as these, run through, and constitute, the spirit of the Book of Psalms. Nothing less would be consistent with the system of Grace ; the Holy Ghost, who operated upon the hearts of the subjects of grace, and indited those spiritual songs, understood well the scheme of mercy ; and on no other scheme could he direct them to God. But will it be contended, that the express words, and letters, constituting the sounds, *in the name of Jesus, or for Christ's sake*, are necessary to evangelical songs of praise ? How many, I demand, of those *imitations* and *hymns*, which have succeeded in banishing the inspired Psalms, because of this supposed defect, have supplied it ? Count the number, and tell us how many ; then atone for the quibble by, at least, a secret blush of generous shame.

destitute of appropriate matter of praise. Thus they *declaim*, and they call it argument. But will it bear examination? I submit the following remarks.

According to the spirit of this objection, as every new favor demands a new song, a psalm, whether of divine or human composition, can be only once appropriately used. This, however; our objecting friends do not act upon themselves; for they use the same hymn oftener than once; though no two circumstances be precisely the same. Consistency, on the principle of the exception, would lead to the preclusion of a *psalm*, or *hymn* book altogether. Every day brings its new mercies, and of course should bring its new song.—Nay; every individual has his special favors, and should produce his special hymn! But disorderly as Zion now is, still more disorderly would her assemblies be, were our brethren consistent with themselves.

The objectors should prove that such expressions of devout sensibility, as those of *Zecharias*, *Mary*, &c. were intended to be introduced as models, according to which, our New Testament Zion should, in future times, be sup-

plied with sacred songs. This has been said, and with confidence too ; but it has not been proved. No person doubts that gratitude is due, on the reception of divine mercies, or, that this devout feeling should be suitably expressed ; but, certainly, this proves nothing for a human system, or collection of songs in our public praise. Again, observe, that

Those who composed the public songs of Zion, were not only inspired ; but were also under the special influence of the Spirit of inspiration, in *that* service. Their compositions were accordingly, not only embodied with the sacred scriptures ; but were also distinctly collected into a Book of Psalms. When our modest brethren shall have substantiated their claims to similar qualifications and appointments, it will be soon enough for us to confess the legitimacy of their productions, to a place beside, or above, the scripture songs. I demand a proof from the word of God, that, *with divine approbation*, a hymn of human composition was, under any dispensation of grace, admitted into the Psalmody of the Church. Let the friends of innovation establish this, or tell us, how they will free themselves from the

charge, of being advocates of will-worship. Again, it is thus objected;

The scripture psalms are abrogated: they were adapted to the ceremonial rites, and so intimately connected with, and founded on them, that they have no being beyond the ceremonial institutions themselves. The fact, that the Old Testament Church had a form of Psalmody adapted to her state, proves that we should have one suitable to the condition of the New Testament dispensation.

This objection, as Dr. Ridgely shews us in his system of Divinity, sets aside the *reading* of the Book of Psalms in our day; for if it be unfit for us to sing it, it is no less so to *read* it. There is no *essential* difference between the dispositions of mind, requisite to reading and singing.—The same ends are, *substantially*, to be sought by the one and the other. Nay, every part of scripture, whether of Old or New Testament, that alludes to the peculiar forms of Israelitish worship, must be expunged as unprofitable. Jesus as the *Lamb* of God, and as the bread of life; Christ as our *passover*, *sacrificed* for us; as our *High Priest*, having entered within the vail; and the representation of our devotions,

as living *sacrifices* offered to God, must all be blotted out, because, between them and ancient rites, there is a connexion; or, because they allude to modes, that, formally, are practised no more. Whatever havoc this would make in the Book of God, it would be consistent with the spirit of the objection.*

It would not be improper to inquire, what was the connexion between these sacred songs and the Mosaic rites, and, what is the relation between the New Testament representations of the whole system of grace, and the authorized practices of the Jewish church. The result of such inquiry would shew, that the worship of that church contemplated the **ETERNAL DEITY** as the object of devotion; a Me-

* Although not a Baxterian, yet with pleasure do I confess, that the Rev. Mr. Baxter, in talent, industry, liberality of sentiment, and piety, had few to equal him. In his *Cases of Conscience*, he proposes this question. "Is it lawful to use David's Psalms in our assemblies?" He replies in the affirmative, and assigns four reasons for the assertion. He concludes by saying, "If it be lawful to sing psalms of our own, or our neighbors' making, much more of God's making, by his Spirit in his prophets." He then states the objection which has, with so little thought, been urged so often since: "They are not suitable to all our cases, nor to all the assembly." To this he replies in three remarks, of such solicity as must be felt by every candid mind; and dismisses the subject in these words: "The Sectarian objections against singing David's Psalms, are so *frivolous* that I will not tire the reader with any more." Mr. Baxter was no *bigot*. in some speculations he was indeed mistaken; but for truth he was a sufferer, and its power, in the life of godliness, he well understood.

diator, *as making atonement* for sin, the way of approaching this object ; the piety of the heart, expressed in forms *divinely prescribed*, the only acceptable service ; and, that, to those forms the scripture songs refer, chiefly, as the means of exhibiting these fundamental principles of real godliness. These are the great principles presented to man, in the writings of the New Testament ; and, between their description in the one testament, and delineation in the other, there exists a remarkable correspondence. They are two blazes of moral splendor combined, shedding their united beams on the extended system of grace, which could not be so fairly and impressively seen in the light of any one of them, should the other be extinguished. The plan of grace is *one*. Both testaments embrace the same great principles of religion ; the Old, as well as the New, testifies of Jesus.* It was of the writings of Moses and the prophets he spoke, when he said, *Search the scriptures—they testify of me*. How deeply must we deplore, that any disciple of the Savior should attempt to invalidate this testimony, or extinguish this light ! Can you, ye

* Joh. 5. 39.

friends of the Redeemer, devise no better way to serve your Lord? what but an insupportable cause could require such reasoning as this : “ The Church of God in former times had a system of Psalmody given by *divine inspiration*, adapted to her circumstances; but it is necessary that we should have a system of songs, adapted to the present circumstances of the Church; therefore—*what?*—every poet has a right to make *uninspired* hymns for the use of the Church ! This is really the argument; But who perceives not that it is a bad one. The premises do not authorize the conclusion. The truth is, the Old Testament Psalms are perfectly suitable to our dispensation. God and his perfections are the same; the graces and exercises of the saint are substantially the same at all times; the description and expression of these, by the *Spirit* of God, we prefer to the paintings of uninspired men. If unsuitable, what pity that neither Jesus nor his apostles, at any time, gave the most distant hint of this fact; nor did they, so far as we know, attempt to supply the defect. Again, it is affirmed that

We cannot sing these Psalms without contradiction and falsehood; for they describe not our case. We cannot sing in truth, that we will offer burnt offerings, nor call upon one another, in our song, to employ the harp and the cymbal; while such offerings are not to be made, and such instruments not to be employed.— What have we to do with the deliverances of Israel, the victories of David, and the worship at Jerusalem?

Verily this objection, like the rest, makes sweeping work. Have the objectors forgotten, that All scripture is profitable? But the whole of the above argument is exceptionable, because, as has been shewn, we *may* sing of what is not precisely our own case, otherwise all congregated singing *must* cease.—

In an assembly of a thousand persons, how many of that thousand are in circumstances, *internal* and *external*, exactly the same?—comparatively few. What does the argument lead to in such a case? That every one must bring a psalm and a doctrine suitable, as he supposes, to his own case. Then, indeed, we would find a practice corresponding with the sentiments of our objecting brethren; but, at

the same time, a practice condemned by Apostolic rebuke. *How is it then, brethren, when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm?*

For our instruction we may sing the experience of others, though that be not precisely our own. Thus the congregation of Israel sung the deliverance of their fathers, and the experience of their inspired Psalmists, in ages after the existence of those events. In the spirit of modern objection it might have been impertinently inquired at our Lord, in the days of his sorrow, and at those, too, with whom he united in the solemnities of worship, what they had to do with the victories of David, the deliverance from Egypt, the division of the sea, and the movements of the mountains. Messiah, however, united in those songs; in singing them, he did not suspect any ground for charging him with uttering a falsehood to his God, or practising a contradiction. The sentiments of the objection are inadmissible,

Because they destroy correct views of the Church of God, and tend to contract the hearts of her members. The Church of Jesus is One ancient and extended association. She is an immortal moral person. Every friend of God,

no matter how remote the age in which he lived, is confessed a member of this illustrious society. Every dispensation of goodness, every act of mercy, to the humblest of her members, she recollects with gratitude. The victories they achieved, the blessings they obtained, the consolations bestowed upon them, and the means of their acquisition, she loves to recount, and, with pious emotion, blesses her God, in the use of those inspired songs, in which they are recorded. Let the *bigot*, and the cold blooded *votary of selfishness*, contract their views, and narrow their hearts to the little circles in which they move ; but let no generous son of Zion act such an ungrateful part. The religion of his Bible is equally favorable to enlargement of intellect, and expansion of affection. Let him understand it well, and the sympathies of his heart will beat in unison with the joys and sorrows of the saint, whether he find him in the Arabian desert, on the sacred mountains of Israel, or under the willows by the rivers of Babylon. In the providences of former times, he will recognize a bearing on the existence, the faith, the consolations, the hopes, and the practice of the

church, in succeeding days ; and, passing strange would it be, indeed, if, in such a case, his heart should remain unmoved, and his lips be sealed in silence. And in what language would his heart desire to express its sensibilities, but in that of the Holy Ghost ?

But the objection is unfounded : for the dispensations to the church, in the days of old, were the dispensation of Messiah. He who *ascended on high*, after his humiliation, was at mount Sinai before it.* He it was who is characterised as *the Angel of Jehovah's presence, that saved, redeemed, bare, and carried them all the days of old.*† From the fall of man, the Son of God, *as Mediator*, has been the actual administrator of divine providence. His hand is visible in all that concerned, or does concern, his Church. Though we do not bring, literally, a burnt offering from the fold, or from the stall, yet we may, and surely ought to bring before God, a fervent zeal, and an ardent love ; and, in the exercise of an unfeigned faith, every believer really brings before his God, the blood of that ineffably valuable victim, to which the devout worshipper was referred, by the sacrificial rites of Moses, and

* Ps. 68. 17. 18. Eph. 4. 8. † Isa. 63. 9.

without reliance on which, he did not hope for acceptance. Since faith was first found on earth, these evangelical sentiments were well understood; hence God inquired, *Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?* He taught his people, that he would not be pleased with thousands of rams, nor with ten thousand rivers of oil. Thus instructed, the penitènt prophet could, while pouring forth the tears of grief, sing, *Thou delightest not in burnt offering*, as any atonement for sin. Could the Israelite, without falsehood and contradiction, sing these, and similar lines to God? With as easy an exposition, and as true an accommodation, can we sing, that *we will come into his house, and bring an offering with us.**

* The truth is, no christian ever felt his devotion embarrassed by such a phraseology. When intending to cavil, or to cover a retreat, to offer such objections, may serve a temporary purpose; but withal it is still below a man of sense, and much more unworthy a man of piety. Equally trival is the exception, respecting the mention of the musical instruments of the temple worship. Though we do not employ the cymbal or the harp, in chanting our solemn song, the naming of them is neither impertinent nor vain. The ancient use of such instruments, instructs us, that, in celebrating the praises of God, we should call forth the voice of melody, as expressive of affections well attuned to the delightful exercise. And may not the christian, as consistently sing these portions of holy song, as the Jew did in his synagogue, where an instrument of music was not employed; or, as the Israelite, in his dwelling, who never owned an organ, and whose hand never touched the strings of a harp? And, at any rate, this objection comes, with

The cause, indeed, must be very bad, where determined advocates cannot find something to say. That what has no great plausibility, will often succeed in persuading a previously inclined mind, has been long remarked; and the remark will probably find an illustration, in the remaining arguments, which I shall briefly review.

It is asked, "*Since we, in prayer, employ our own compositions, why not do the same in our songs of praise?*" I reply, because the cases are not similar. Prayer and praise are distinct ordinances. There is not the same necessity for a liturgy of prayer, that there is for a system of sacred songs; we can have social

no very great degree of consistency, from our Presbyterian friends, who direct the music of their beloved hymns, with the *bass violin* and *German flute*. Nay, though they possess no harp, and recognize no altar, yet their imitation of the 43d Psalm, teaches the worshipper to sing,

Before thine altar, Lord,
My harp and song shall sound
The glories of thy word.

Comparatively few of the psalms of inspiration, speak in the typical language of the Old Testament institutions, and that language in those few, by no means renders them obscure to the Christian, who is duly conversant with his Bible. The truth is, "The writers of the New Testament, wrote in the idiom of the synagogue."† The phraseology is that of the Israelitish nation, clothed in Greek words. "The figure in the Psalms is that which is peculiar to the Hebrew language, in which the figure gives its meaning with as much perspicuity as the plainest speech."—*Horsely*.

* Campbell.

prayer without a prescribed form, but not social singing of praise. Again, God has not seen meet to appoint, at any time, for the stated use of his church, a book of prayers; but he has given an inspired book of *psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs*. And, lastly, observe, that the Lord has promised his Spirit, as the Spirit of supplications, to help the infirmities of his sanctified ones, who neither know how to pray, nor for what to pray, as they ought; but on the page of inspiration there is no promise of aid from his Spirit, in the composition of a book of hymns, for the public service of his church. This seems to intimate; that to such a work he proposed not to call any of her sons. These three remarks satisfy me upon the subject, what shall satisfy those who adopt the other side of the question, is not for me to decide.

The supposed obscurity of the Book of Psalms, is alleged as a reason for the preference of the modern hymn book. In this argument there is undoubtedly some truth; yet it proves but little. The *hymn book* of the modern poet, however swelled it may be, has infinitely less meaning than the *Book of Psalms*; it re-

quires less intellect and industry to enter into its spirit; less acquaintance with the truths, providence, and grace of God, to understand it; and much less perfection to come up to its demands, than do the songs of inspiration. But this argument goes much too far. Whatever force it has in setting aside the Book of Psalms, from its primary use, will operate no less powerfully against the whole Bible. One of our modern evangelizers might, perhaps, be found capable of furnishing the world with a *system* of divinity, theoretical and practical, much more easily understood than the writings of the Old and New Testaments; and, probably, by employing an ambiguous phraseology, and "a charitable latitude" of meaning, there might be in it little, if any thing, found contrary to the word of truth. What would be thought of substituting such a system in place of the Bible? This would, as in the case of the Book of Psalms, supersede all the labors of exposition. Mr. Freeman* disapproves of lecturing upon an inspired Psalm, in order to a singing of it with understanding. He prefers those "psalms which carry the explication in them."

* Disc. p. 23.

selves. This explication is given," he says, "in the version, (imitation?) of Dr. Watts." If, then, an *imitation* of the Bible, of more easy comprehension than the Bible itself, can be found, why not adopt it, in place of that mysterious and inspired Book? If the above reason has any weight, it would lead the man who consistently pursues it, to the result now stated.*

* It discovers no small degree of shallowness to argue, as do Messrs. Freeman, Baird, and others, that, to sing a paraphrase, is preferable to singing an inspired song, after making upon it an expository lecture. The lecturer or paraphrast, whether he communicates his exposition from the pulpit or the press, *may err, may mistake* the spirit of the text, may only communicate *a part* of its meaning, and at best can only profess to *aid* in understanding it; is it not, then, better still to retain the text? It is uncorrupt, still retains its *spirit* and *plenitude of meaning*, and, from it, the saint will derive what no exposition can give?—What is now said might be exemplified from every page of Watts' *Imitation*. Take then, for instance, Psalm 45. 9—"Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir." This is the text. It is the word of God. Here is the Scottish metre version of these words:

Upon thy right hand did the queen
In gold of Ophir stand.

Those who confess the prose to be the language of the Holy Ghost, will not deny the metre to be equally sacred. Let us now see the version and exposition of Watts—

At his right hand our eyes behold,
The queen arrayed in purest gold;
*The world admires her heavenly dress;
Her robes of joy and righteousness*

Now, although the ideas of the text are not fully given in the two first lines, and what are given are but feebly expressed; yet they are not so exceptionable as the two last lines, which labor under the very great *inconvenience* of being *untrue*; for the world, as distinguished from the Church, never admired her heavenly dress; her robe of joy and righteousness. It is her

We know, indeed, that our brethren who use, and vindicate the use of the *imitation* of the Psalms, and other hymns, would shrink from such a conclusion. Why, then, do they embrace premises from which that conclusion would necessarily flow? I am, indeed, afraid

dress, her robe of righteousness, and holy joy, that have made the Church an object of hatred and derision to the world. *The world hateth you*, is the testimony of the faithful witness.—Joh. 15. 19. and 17. 14. Those who are described as *haters* of the light, as *not submitting* to God's righteousness, but as *enemies* of all righteousness, are certainly not likely to *admire* these in the Church. Rom. 10. 3. Act. 13. 10. Of a similar character are the following lines;

A soul oppressed with sin's desert,
My God will ne'er despise.

The cases of Cain, Judas, and all the trembling devils of hell, falsify this assertion. It is retained in many copies, though expunged out of some. It is calculated to foster a false hope.

Again examine Psal. 51. 4. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest."

'Gainst thee, thee only have I sinned,
in thy sight done this ill;

That when thou speak'st thou may'st be just,
and clear in judging still.

Scottish version.

Should'st thou condemn my soul to hell,

And crush my flesh to dust,

Heaven would approve thy vengeance well,

And earth must own it just:

Watts.

The *Imitation* is not a version. It is not even an attempt at one. The sentiment is not authorized by the psalm, nor by any other portion of scripture, that represents the approved confession of a penitent. Never did the Holy Ghost instruct the heart, or life of a *believing penitent*, confessing sin and pleading for pardon, to *contradict* his declarations in the inspired page. Yet the words, and sentiment of the *Imitation*, are in direct contradiction to the word of God, in such a case; and

that the fact on which this objection is founded, *ignorance of the Bible*, has a very extensive influence, in the banishment of *inspired odes*, from the Psalmody of the Church. And, like most expedients, we may be pretty certain ; that instead of remedying, the preference of an

are only fit for the lips of one in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity ; for, " If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." I Joh. 1. 9. Once more, consult Psal. 98. 2. " The Lord hath made known his salvation"—

The Lord God his salvation
hath caused to be known ;—

Scottish version.

He comes to make his blessing flow
Far as the curse is found.

Watts.

Is the language of the *Imitation* here, the language of the text, or of any other scripture? Did the Savior, indeed, intend to make his blessing " flow as far as the curse is found"? The curse is found upon all devils, and wicked men *universally* ; Without exception, then, shall his blessing reach them all?—Or is a smooth line of poetry, though containing a *false doctrine*, of more importance than the *truth* of God's word! So much for the possibility of an erroneous exposition.

Let us next advert to the possibility of mistaking the spirit of the inspired song. Take as an example, Psal. 89. 6 " For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?"

For who in heaven with the Lord
may once himself compare?

Who is like God among the sons
of those that mighty are?

Scottish version,

There's none of all my sons above
So much my image, or my love ;
Celestial powers thy subjects are,
Then what can earth to thee compare?

Watts.

The text is the worshipper's confession of Jehovah's supreme perfection. This is the spirit of it. But what is the

imitation, will increase the evil. Books whose scope is to conduct their reader to the lively oracles of truth, may be useful; but those intended to supersede the appointed use of any portion of the word of God, must be of dangerous tendency.

We have just turned from an argument, pleading the ignorance of New Testament worshippers, as a reason for setting aside the Book of Psalms, as the matter of the Church's song; we now meet another of an opposite cast. "Christian attainments, it seems, are of an order too high to be suited with the sober compositions of inspired men." How vain is man! How easily the soothing accents of flattery induce to self deception! Tell us, ye

comment, as given in the *Imitation*? Not the inspired language of the devout man, who does homage to his Maker; but the language of the Father to the Son, is the gloss! This is not the meaning of the text.

Once more, let us attend to the 16th verse of the same Psalm;
 "And in thy righteousness shall they be exalted."

And in thy righteousness shall they
 Exalted be on high.

Scottish version.

His righteousness exalts their hope.

Watts.

The idea, in the *imitation*, is inadequate to the text. The exaltation of the *person*, is much more than the elevation of an *affection* of his mind. But in the *imitation* is none of that massy thought, and rich luxuriance of meaning, which distinguish our inspired songs.

trumpeters of your own graces, what are those attainments, and those exercises, of grace, which the Spirit of your Redeemer has not described with infallible accuracy in the Book of God?—yea, even in the Book of Psalms? Till you find some, not there described, we beg you to excuse a few of your fellow pilgrims in the journey of life, if they suspect your boasted acquisitions, to be the illusions of the twilight of a partially instructed mind. We cannot highly admire that *humility*, which induced the author of the Imitation of the Psalms, to set himself before all the prophets of the Israelitish Church,* as to qualifications; for furnishing us with a system evangelical psalms. To remedy such bloatings of self

*“ Nor is the attempt (*of making a new psalm book*) vain-glorious, or presuming; for, in respect of clear evangelic knowledge, *The least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than all the Jewish prophets.*”—Watts’ Pref. p. 6.

There is a sense in which the New Testament ministry is superior to that of the Old Testament—That which to the one was matter of *promise*, is to the other matter of *fact*. But was Dr. W. as well qualified to make a book of Psalms, as were David and other prophets? The Dr. has intimated that he was *better* qualified, and his friends agree with him; for they take *his*, and *reject and vilify*, that of the others. We must, nevertheless, demur; because we *know*, that to supply a system of Psalms, David—and others—were inspired. We do not believe this of Dr. W. It requires the *madness* of this *enthusiasm* to go only a little farther, and we shall have the whole Old Testament rejected, in order to substitute the *superior* illusions of some modern *illuminati*.

complacency, a more intimate acquaintance with the spirit which breathes in the scripture song, may, with confidence, be recommended.

As an argument for human composures in our psalmody, we find it further urged, "*That Old Testament songs are defective, and that the New Testament forms are few.*" If the poetic compositions of the New Testament be very limited, instead of taking the fact as an argument to justify the practice contended for, I would rather understand it as an admonition to us, to confine ourselves to those portions of the Book of God, that, from their structure, evidently appear intended for the purpose of Psalmody. If he who has the residue of the Spirit, enlarged not the number of our sacred hymns, when finishing the canon of revelation, and settling, finally, the constitution of his Church, we should proceed to the task with cautious steps. We should have his command. Let us, then, turn to the holy volume, and, before we fill his sanctuary with our own effusions, let the stores of inspiration be exhausted.

But, again, it is contended, that "*The imitation, and the hymns of modern date, are*

better calculated to arouse, to warm, and elevate the affections, than are the productions of inspiration." So, I know, it has been said, and no doubt thought; but it is only hypothesis, or something worse; and by what evidence is the hypothesis supported? Affections may be awakened, and the passions thrown into tumult, where no piety exists.—*About* religion there may be much elevation of heart, and yet no genuine devotion. Inattention to this fact has proved as auspicious to the progress of a raging enthusiasm, as it has been unpropitious to the cause of the religion of the Bible. That the lighter principles of our constitution may be more readily excited, and animal feeling more easily cast into commotion, by the *flippant* verbiage of man, than by the more *deep* and *solemn* delineations of the Holy Ghost, is not hard of belief. So Augustine informs us, that "the Donatists inflamed their minds with human compositions, and reproached the orthodox for singing, with sobriety, the divine songs of the prophets."—The character of that warmth which is produced by the words of man, rather than from the appointed use of those of God, is a just ob-

ject of suspicion, and its consequences of dread. *Behold all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.* †*

* Isa. 50. 11.

† If an elevated devotion consist in an exercise of heart, corresponding to the glories of the divine character, as these are displayed in the face of Jesus, and to our relation to him, as saved sinners, it may very reasonably be questioned, whether the productions of human ingenuity be better adapted to it, than the words of God. Conjecture is no more admissible in true religion, than in genuine science; and, when admitted, is no less pernicious in the former, than it is injurious to the latter.

Much has been ascribed to the influence of pious hymns, of human composition in the religious movements of our days.—But before any valid conclusion can be drawn from this, in their favor, two points must previously be settled: the first is, the character of these movements. Should what is most prominent in these excitements be of doubtful character, or, perhaps, condemnable at the bar of inspired truth, little commendation would be due to that influence by which they are effected. The next point to be ascertained, is, supposing the character of these movements sustained, as really gracious, was this character derived from the use of those hymns? Or did it proceed from the use of other means divinely appointed to effect a work of grace? Until the friends of modern hymn books shall have satisfactorily settled these inquiries, which are certainly fair ones, others will hold themselves excused in not giving that credit to the hypothesis, for it is no more than hypothesis, which its advocates claim.

It is most notorious that those excitements called *revivals* of religion, which make the greatest noise, are effected where the *most pernicious errors* are habitually taught. That these, and modern hymns, have a great share in the production of those noisy but *short lived* agitations, need not be doubted. Israel's worship of the golden calf, was marked by a greater excitement, than the usual, and approved worship of Jehovah. A visit to those favored districts of *revival*, a few months after a *magazine* description, or *ecclesiastical* report, has been given

It is again contended, that “ *The poetic compositions in general use, particularly those of Dr. Watts, are more elegant in diction, and, in sentiment, more evangelical, than is any literal version of the Bible Psalms ; and therefore demand a preference.*” Into the literary merits

of the multitudes converted, would cast a shade of doubt, generally, on those fine narratives. And the man who considers, that the embracing of truth, turning to God *through a crucified and exalted Savior*, and living a life of *practical* godliness, are the best proofs of real conversion, wishes, sincerely, that things were published as they really are, and that our country furnished *one journal*, which would venture to tell all the *truth*.

The idea that the songs of inspiration are inadequate to the elevation of modern devotion, demands another remark.—When we look to the christian heroes of the reformation, when we review the intellectual pre-eminence of those champions for truth, who flourished in the 16th and 17th centuries, when we consider the ardor of their piety, and the fervor of their enlightened zeal ; the firmness of their character, and the magnitude of their achievements ; and compare with these the *frivolity*, the indifference to truth, though less rage for innovation, that characterized the ecclesiastics of the eighteenth century, the comparison is as humbling to the character of the latter, as it is honorable to the former. Yet among these highly favored men of God, whose devotion was of the loftiest kind, and whose deeds of valor, in the cause of God and man, are immortal ; whose experience in the life of godliness was deep and substantial, while their dangers were great and their sufferings extreme ; among the thousands of those martyrs, divinely ennobled as they were, not *one* was found to imagine, that the inspired psalms were of a character too *flat* for his piety, *unsuitable* to a gospel day, or *unfit* for the various conditions of the christian life. Such imaginations were unknown in those days, when God was seen among men, dispensing, in measures unusually large, the gifts of his Spirit. Complaints of the obscurity of the inspired page were left to exercise the blinded votaries of the Romish Church, and, to *regret* their *flatness*, was a suitable employment for the raving devotees of John of Leyden. Robert Barclay, Isaac Watts, John Wesley, and their devotees, engaged in the same unholy work. Can the blessing

of these compositions, is, at present, besides my design to inquire. Should all that is claimed for the *orthodoxy* of their sentiments, the *correctness* of their figures, and the *elegance* of their diction, be admitted ; still they are but the productions of human ingenuity. They are *not* even *imperfect versions* ; the best of them rise no higher than *partial imitations*.— Whatever *prettiness* may belong to them, I must prefer the words of inspiration, even in a *version* of the humblest pretensions.

But this supposed excellence belongs not to the compositions of Dr. Watts. The fact that so much labor has been employed upon the *imitation* of the psalms, proves the force of the conviction, that it was imperfect. This imperfection extended to the sentiment as well as to the phraseology.*

of heaven rest on such a course ? Hear the opinion of the evangelical *Romaine*. "Experience," says he, "demonstrates, that God *does* bless the singing of *Psalms* in the Church, and does *not* bless the singing of men's hymns."—"You may bring *your poems* into the Church, and may be vastly delighted with performing them. So is the vainest creature at the opera. The pleasure in *both cases*, arises from the same cause.—But there *can* be no more spiritual edification in the one than in the other : because neither of them is the *ordinance* of God."

Works, vol. 8.

* We know, indeed, that to intimate this is unsafe, even in men of eminence. The character of the late Dr. Dwight, as a man of literature and taste, is deservedly high in our country ;

The idea of these compositions being of a character more evangelical, than a *literal version* of an inspired Psalm, shall now claim no farther notice. To hear the assertion from the reputed friends of the Bible, is an omen of no good.

With full as much confidence as candor, it is asserted, that *Dr. Watts had as good a right to make, or translate psalms, as Mr. Rouse*. The equality of the right is not denied, but the assertion is calculated to deceive the unthinking. It assumes the fact, that the production of Watts is a *version*, which is *not* true. It was designed as a *substitute* for every fair translation; and one of its excellences is said to be its *remoteness* from the original. That called Rouse's *paraphrase*, is intended as, and really is, a fair version; though not so perfect as to preclude improve-

yet, such was the strength of the torrent of public opinion amongst us, in favor of the *imitation, errors and all*, that even the President of Yale College dared to correct only a *part* of these. Dr. Watts, he says "was *not distinguished as a correct writer*." Thus still the imperfections of the work are proclaimed.—These are not denied by such of its friends, as are capable of judging in the case. Criticism is therefore precluded. Were these imperfections confined to style or composition, the matter would be of comparatively small importance: but they extend to the expression of erroneous sentiments, unwarrantable omissions, and change of subject; to derangement of inspired order, rejection of scriptural metaphors, as well as to violations of the canons of composition.

ment). Let it, however, be kept in mind, that a greater departure from the *thought* and *language* of the Holy Ghost, would constitute no part of this improvement. It must be again repeated, that the contest is not between *version* and *version* ; but between *translation* and *imitation* ; between *inspired songs*, and those of human *composure*. The assertion of the disputer is this : Dr. Watts had as good a right to imitate the Book of Psalms, as Mr. Rouse had to translate it ; and we have the same right to employ, in the worship of God, the imitation, that others have to use the translation. The argument is of the same species as this—The British divines, in the reign of James I, made a version of the Bible ; therefore, Ethan Allen had as good a right to make *his bible* ; and those who choose it, have as good a right to employ it, as others have to use the translation, for the rule of their faith and manners ! The value of the argument, thus applied, every christian can appreciate.

Upon the declaration so frequently made, that Dr. Watts had as good a right to furnish us with a book of Psalms, as had the inspired prophet, David, I make no additional remarks.

The causes which have led to such an assertion must be deplored, and the consequences must be feared. The existence of such a sentiment among professors, at this day, is sufficient to justify the present attempt to turn your attention to the subject. Let the members of every church be told, let them be made to understand, that no production of the human mind, however high its rank, can compare with any page of the inspired volume.

There is one objection which, were it not so frequently adduced, for sake of the objectors, I would willingly conceal—It is substantially expressed by Dr. W. “Some Psalms are so full of cursings, that they hardly become the tongue of a follower of the blessed Jesus”!!!

The objectors certainly forget, that these psalms were given by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Those usually specified as objectionable, are expressly quoted by the Apostle Peter, as the words of the divine Spirit.* May not, then, a follower of the blessed Savior use those words, which the Holy Spirit of that Savior has dictated for his instruction?—

* Act. 1. 16. 20, Psal. 69. 25. & 109. 8.

Might it not be well for the objectors to pause, and consider, whether such language as they employ, approaches not *towards* a blaspheming of that Spirit, who, through the instrumentality of his word, sanctifies the soul? But this objection proceeds from a false view of the divine character—God is *just* as well as *merciful*, and he instructs his church to “sing both of mercy and judgment.”††

But to notice every cavil would be endless, as it would be useless. Collateral subjects of disputation I purposely avoid, that the main one may, as much as possible, be brought unembarrassed, and fairly before my reader. How far I have succeeded in a lucid statement of my subject, shall be left to others to decide. I can only say, that I intended well. But whatever may be thought of me or my work, I am not without confidence, that a scriptural Psalmody shall ultimately prevail. Public opinion is fluctuating, and mere party spirit will,

† Ps. 101. 1.

‡ God has *threatened* his and his people's implacable enemies with ruin; this overthrow is a *promise* to his Church, and every time she prays, *Thy will be done*, she *really* employ this language which is said to be unfit for a follower of the blessed Jesus. God's Spirit never dictated, or approved of *private personal* vengeance; but he teaches to pray for the accomplishment of every promise, and to *approve* of the decisions of unwavering justice.

in time, yield to the dictates of divine authority. The period is coming when men will believe, with an elegant writer of the last age, "that when mortals converse with their Creator, they cannot do it in so proper a style as in that of the Holy scriptures."|| The ascendancy of the Bible, at this day, gives ground of assurance, that we have not to look through the *vista* of ages, to see its triumph completed. Its triumph is at hand. Yet I am not insensible of the points, from which opposition to a reform may be expected. Where men of high standing have pledged themselves, the usual share of integrity that falls to the citizens of Zion, is not always sufficient to induce a retraction of incorrect sentiment, and a retracing of their devious steps. Those, too, who, having broken their pledge to a plan of correct order and worship, and being destitute of character or principle, are set afloat on the tumultuous sea of conflicting opinions, without compass or helm, and having an eye to no definite haven, are the characters from whom a scriptural Psalmody has most to fear.

Still I am not without hope, that, among those who now employ an Imitation of sacred songs,

|| Spectator, Vol. 6. No. 408.

instead of the inspired odes themselves, many, rising above the little spirit of faction, and asserting an independency of party names, will lift the voice in a testimony against the reproach, attempted to be cast on the Book of Psalms. Such will bear in mind, that the contest is not for Old Testament, in preference to New Testament doctrine and language. They will recognize the impression of the Holy Ghost, upon the language and doctrine of both the Testaments; and they will prefer that which God hath given, to any thing that man would substitute in its place. A moment's thought will show them, that the Book of Psalms is "the Bible in miniature"; precisely what an evangelical Psalm Book should be, that is, a compressed exhibition of Jehovah's character, grace, and providence; of man's state, experience, and prospects. They will not be amused by the idle rant of some scripture songs being incapable of personal application to the precise case of the individual; for they are taught by that Spirit who is their Sanctifier and Comforter, that "all scripture is profitable for instruction." This instruction in righteousness they can derive from in-

spired delineations of the perfections, works, and grace of God, and from similar descriptions of the experience of the elder children of their heavenly Father, who have travelled before them, the paths of sorrow, of holy joy, and of life. To them, after all the specious declamation which has no bearing on it, shall have been heard, the question will still recur; Whether are more excellent, those sacred "psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs," recommended by their inspiration, and by the experience of the children of grace, in every age; or those necessarily defective effusions, which can claim no higher origin than the ingenuity of man? This is, indeed, the question. May I not hope that it will receive a candid consideration?

Plain as it is, and important as it is deemed to be, the hope of an immediate and universal change, is not authorized by the character of this age. The activity of our time is, indeed, imposing, and in it there is much to praise; but the most conspicuous portion of it, requires little of that self denial which distinguishes true religion, and, alas! that charity whose pretensions are highest, rejoices but

little in the truth. The semblance of love, the treacherous salutation, may betray the truth, and without suspecting it, an ill directed zeal, *about something* pertaining to religion, may, in its associations, recommend the most fatal error. And where is the man whose guards are so skilfully placed, as to be out of danger from the enemy at *every* point? This consideration instructs us, not in a foolish self gratulation, but in an humble vigilance.

While, therefore, we should guard against the impostures of that empty charity, whose gifts are so few; and not be deceived by that love of noisy pretensions, which never gives of its own, we should, with equal care, keep a watchful eye on that orthodoxy and that zeal, which are separated from *obedience* to God, and *good will* to man. There may be a cold blooded orthodoxy of opinion, that has no alliance with the *living* truth of Jesus; and there may be a consuming zeal for names and forms, that sits enthroned in an unfeeling heart. That soundness of mind and expansion of affection, which are the offspring of the transforming grace of God, are equidistant from each of these extremes; with this mind and this affec-

tion, should the christian enter the field of controversy. By these will he be saved from that tameness that disqualifies to vindicate, with becoming spirit, the cause of righteousness; and from that cruelty which betrays a callous heart.

That this safe and middle way, has been un-deviatingly pursued in these pages, the writer will not venture to affirm. Any deviations from it, however, which he may discover, will furnish matter of sincere regret; for his cause authorizes nothing but what combines all that is manly, with whatever is divine. In this discussion, personal animosity can have no place—to the unkind emotions of our imperfect nature there is no temptation. Whatever of frowning aspect may have appeared upon my page, is altogether on a public ground; and, it is believed, a style of remark, still more severe, than any employed, would have been justified by the sentiments which have passed in review. But, asperity of remark, however well merited, can only be pleasant to the *heartless* censor: To recognize the worth of talent to honor distinguished virtue, to rejoice in the testimonials of unaffected piety, wherever

found, are employments much more congenial with the habitual temper of a well constructed mind. In such exercises, it is hoped, we shall often find advantage united with pleasure. And although we must now contemplate our sky still darkened with thick clouds of lamentable mistakes; yet the morning of a brighter day to the Church of God, than she has long enjoyed, we hope, is about to dawn. May the rising glories of that long wished for day, speedily bless our world; then the promise shall be fully realized—*Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.* With affectionate regard, dear brethren,

I bid you

farewell.

Galway,
N. Y.
Oct. 1818.

GILBERT M'MASTER.

APPENDIX, No. 1.

(See page 121.)

DR. WATTS.

WHAT were the opinions of Dr. Watts on the subject of the *Trinity*, and *person* of Jesus Christ? It would be pleasant, indeed, could we find him among the sound divines of England; but there, it is believed, his works will not allow him to be placed. An examination of these will prove him to have embraced a compound of *Noetianism*, *Sabellianism*, *Arianism*, and *Soci-nianism*. He was not of a spirit implicitly to follow any one leader. If any be disposed to distinguish between the *practical* faith of his heart, and the *speculative* articles of his creed, I have no objection. Believing, however, as I do, that God constitutes not mortals arbiters of the state of men, I have only to do with the latter—upon the former it is not mine to decide. The Dr's. sentiments concerning the Redeemer, will be found in his "Discourses on the glory of Christ." The edition now before me is that of 1746, but a little more than a year before the author's death—There you will find him zealously maintaining, that the human soul of Christ, *created before all worlds*, is the *Lord* from heaven, spoken of 1 Cor. 15. 47.*—That in the image of this pre-existent spirit, Adam was created†—That the *sonship* of Christ, belongs, exclusively, to his *human* soul‡—That the covenant of redemption was not made with a person who was the Father's *equal*, but with this *created* spirit||—Such are some of the views, which this author supposes would make the Bible more defensible. His opinions on the doctrine of the *Trinity*, may be gathered from the following address to God.

"Dear and blessed God, hadst thou been pleased, in any *one plain scripture*, to have informed me which of the different opinions about the holy *Trinity*, among the contending parties of

* P. 175—6. † P. 203. ‡ P. 201. || P. 180. 225.

Christians, had been true, thou *knowest* with how much *real satisfaction*, and *joy* my *unbiased* heart would have opened itself to receive and embrace the divine discovery. Hadst thou told me *plainly*, in any *single text*, that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are *three real distinct persons* in thy divine nature, I had never suffered myself to be *bewildered* in so many doubts, nor embarrassed with so many strong *fears* of assenting to the mere inventions of men, instead of divine doctrine; but I should have *humbly* and *immediately* accepted thy words, so far as it was possible for me to understand them: as the only rule of my faith. Or, hadst thou been pleased so to express and include this proposition in the *several scattered parts* of thy book, from whence my reason and conscience, might with care *find out*, and with certainty *infer* this doctrine, I should have joyfully employed *all* my reasoning powers, with their utmost skill and activity, to have found out this inference, and ingrafted it into my soul.

—Holy Father,—how can such weak creatures ever take in so strange, so difficult, and so abstruse a doctrine as this? And can this strange and perplexing notion of three real persons, going to make up one true God, be so necessary and so important a part of that christian doctrine, which in the Old Testament, and the New, is represented as so plain and so easy, even to the meanest understanding?—*Watts' Works*, vol. 7: 476—7.

Leeds Edition.

Let us advert again to the manner in which his writings have been understood by eminent divines, in different countries, and of various religious persuasions. Dr. Dodridge was his friend, his companion, admirer, and biographer. He was capable of entering into the views, and certainly cannot be suspected of a disposition to misrepresent the sentiments of Dr. Watts. I refer the reader, then, to the statements of Dr. Dodridge on this subject—

“For as much as—there is such a change and humiliation asserted concerning Christ, as *could not* properly be asserted concerning an *eternal and immutable* being, as such, there is reason to believe that Christ had *before his incarnation* a *created or derived nature*, which would admit of such a change—*Watts' Diss. on the Trin.* no. 3. *Works*, vol. 6. p. 518—54. See Dodridge, II. p. 154.

Again, “Dr. Watts maintained One Supreme God dwelling in the human nature of Christ, which he supposes to have existed the first of all creatures; and speaks of the divine *Logos*,

to the wisdom of God, and the Holy Spirit as the divine power, or the influence and effect of it; which he says is a SCRIPTURAL person, i. e. spoken of figuratively in scripture, under personal characters. Watts's Diss. No. 7. Works, vol. 6. p. 630."—See Dodridge, vol. II. p. 193.

He also referred Christ's being *the only begotten Son of God*, "to his being the promised Messiah, or to his extraordinary conception, and exaltation to his kingdom as Mediator." See Dodr. II. 178.

President Edwards urges fourteen distinct arguments against the hypothesis of Dr. Watts, concerning Jesus Christ. He has this remark—"According to what seems to be Dr. Watts's scheme, the Son of God is *no distinct divine person from the Father*."* That his son, the late Dr. Edwards, viewed the subject in a similar light, is more than presumable, from the fact, that he transcribed these arguments of his venerable Father, for the press. The same conclusion may be drawn in respect of Dr. Erskine, of Edinburgh, from the interest he took in the publication of these Essays of the President of *Nassau Hall*; and from the special notice which he takes of *that* part of them, containing the refutation of the scheme of Dr. W.

In the same light are these writings of Dr. W. understood by the venerable Dr. Anderson.† He taught, says Dr. A.—"that the Holy Spirit is not a person really distinct from the Father, but the divine power—that there are no *real distinct persons* in the Godhead." In a similar point of view is the subject contemplated by the Rev'd James R. Willson, in his very interesting "History of opinions on the atonement." Hear the confession of another—It is that of Dr. Ely. "We cannot deny, says Dr. E. that Dr. Watts' treatise—has wrought *much mischief*—It was the book which first turned the head of the Rev'd John Sherman‡—we wish

* Essays. † Vindiciæ Cantus Dom. p. 78.

‡ Mr. Sherman became a violent Socinian, and wrote a book to prove that the Savior was *only* a man. Dr. W's book seduced him.

the *pernicious* consequences of that treatise had terminated here."* Ely's Rev. No. 2. p. 221.

In the same page we are informed, that Mr. Allison, late chaplain to Congress, last January, preached the heresy to our representatives, and gave Dr. W. as the *author* of the doctrine.

Thus, with *Noctus* and *Sabellius*, the Dr. maintained a *certain* union to subsist between the man Christ and the divine nature or some portion of it—With *Arius* he maintained, that the Son of God is a Super-Angelic creature, formed *before* the foundation of the world, and employed in the *creation* of all things—And with the *Socinians*, that the Holy Ghost is not a distinct person; but the divine *power*, or its *effect*? Such were the opinions of Dr. W. written and left on record by himself; and thus have these opinions been understood by *Dodridge*, the two *Edwards*, *Erskine*, *Anderson*, *Willson*, *Ely* &c. And it is notorious, that every Socinian, who has read his works, claims him, as of that school. His solemn address admits of no explanation. If ever man is serious, in the expression of his sentiments, it is when he addresses God; and, if ever he expresses those sentiments with precision, it is when he writes them. Dr. W. has done both—He ventured to tell his Maker, that the doctrine of three *real* persons in the Godhead, is a *strange* and *perplexing* notion, which we cannot receive; and which is not even *inferible* from the *whole* contents of the Book of God!

The truth is, "Comparatively few divines of any class, —at the darkened period in which Dr. W. lived and wrote, held out the *glimmering* lamp of sound evangelical instruction."† Giving too much way to the gam-

* Dr. Ely admits Dr. W. to have been a Sabellian; yet Dr. E. recommends his works, "errors notwithstanding," in a style which we were not prepared to expect. Could I hope that this page would reach Philadelphia, I would remonstrate against the author of "The Contrast," giving his name to circulate the confessed heresies of W. But these works and *his* recommendation, now go hand in hand in the production of "much mischief."

† Christ. Obs.

bolds of imagination, it "occasionally carried him out" (say his friends) into moral and sentimental excursions beyond the usual limits of plain evangelical truth.*—And, according to the historian of the English dissentors,† from these excursions it was no easy task to bring him back. Childishly fond of something new, over the creatures of his fancy he doated with an overweening affection, not because they were legitimate ; but because they were his own.

It is not a little strange, that a doubt suggested as to the orthodoxy of Dr. W. should, in certain quarters, produce so much sensibility. Why not contend with equal zeal, for the soundness of *Robinson* and *Priestly*? No man will hesitate to place Robinson, the author of the village sermons, and Watts, in the same rank as to orthodoxy.—The same *Robinson*, the author of *Ecclesiastical Researches*, and *Priestly*, the historian of *Early Opinions*, were fellow laborers in the same cause of heresy—Why then separate *Watts*, *Robinson*, and *Priestly*? They were all learned and amiable men ; and all *equally* mistaken in the *first* principles of true religion—the *object* and *medium* of worship. But Watts gave a book of Psalms to orthodox churches !

No. 2.

MODE OF SINGING.

IN Psalmody the music should be solemn and simple. Perhaps there might be a general reform effected in it by the banishment of every difficult tune, and the adoption of a manner better calculated to engage the attention to the sentiment, rather than to the sound. Would not the *chanting* of the Psalms in prose, be more congenial with the nature of sacred worship, than the modish art, which, almost universally, is at war with the engagement of the mind and the heart? I have said *chanting* the Psalms in *prose* ; not that I am displeased

* Ibid † Bogue.

with a measured version, for if the translation be *false*, whether it be in prose or verse, it is equally the word of God. The Westminster directory enjoins it on the whole congregation to unite in this service, and to sing directly on, except in a given case. The spirit of that injunction has the sanction of good sense. One very general practice, however, cannot be reprobated in terms too strong: that of an entire congregation, say, of 1000, or 1500 persons, resigning the *whole* of this part of worship to a dozen or two, usually of the most trifling characters; for the choir demands no qualification but a well tuned voice. The *whole* attention is obviously devoted to the music. The *notes* of the tune, frequently, occupy the place of the *psalm book*! And this *farce* is countenanced by ministers of religion—this *outrage* on devotion, and *insult* against the God of heaven is called religious worship!

No. 3.

The Creed of the Advocates of a human Psalmody, as deduced from their writings.

I. WE believe and profess, that divine institution cannot be pleaded for the use of the Book of Psalms, in the Church of God.—Latta, p. 77. Freeman, p. 20.

II. That the introduction of the Book of Psalms into the Psalmody of the Church, was an innovation, *unauthorized*, except by *Arians*, to the exclusion of an evangelical psalmody. L. p. 77.

III. That the language and doctrine of the Old Testament are very *remote* from an evangelical creed, such as that agreed upon by the council of Nice. Ib. p. 50—51.

IV. That the word of Christ is *wholly*, to the exclusion of *all* the Old Testament scriptures, confined to the writings of the New Testament. Ibid. p. 20. 29. Freeman, p. 4.

V. That the Father as a distinct object of worship, and the Son as the way of access to him, are wholly un-

known to the Old Testament; that the worship of that dispensation was not presented through the Mediator.

Latta, p. 29. & Pref. p. 7.

VI. That the use of the Book of Psalms, in the Church's worship, decides *clearly* in favor of Arianism, and directly tends to make heresy triumphant.

Latta, p. 77. Freeman, p. 14. 15.

VII. That "the Psalms of David were properly suited to a *designed perversion of truth*, under the specious argument of divine authority," to lead the mind "from the doctrine of a divine Savior." Baird, page 81.

VIII. That the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was not designed to inspire converts to the gospel, with *veneration and respect* for the Psalms of David.

Latta, p. 42.

IX. That the *matter and words* of the scripture songs flatten our devotion, awaken our regret, and touch all the springs of uneasiness within us. See Watts' pref. page 3. 4.

X. That they contain such dreadful *curses* against man, as to make them contrary to the spirit of the gospel. Ibid. p. 4. 5.

XI. That the use of these songs of inspiration checks us in our ascent toward heaven, throws the veil of Moses over our hearts, darkens our views of God the Savior, and dulls our worship of mere necessity. Ibid.

XII. That their use shocks the soul, ruffles the spirit, spoils the devotion, and affrights the conscience, lest, in employing the language of inspiration, we speak a *falsehood* unto God. Ibid. p. 5.

XIII. That to sing many of the Bible Psalms implies a contradiction, and cannot be done without *falsehood*.

Freeman, p. 18. Baird, p. 43.

XIV. That every christian possessing a poetical talent is more capable, and as much authorized, to make a system of psalms for the use of the Church, as were any of the inspired prophets; nay; the *spontaneous effusions* of the christian poet are preferable to the set compositions of inspired bards. Latta, p. 23. 96.— Baird, p. 82. Watts, Pref. 6.

XV. That several parts of the inspired songs, as of the 119th Psalm, are of little use ; the matter so confused and incongruous, that it requires much labor and transposition to obtain *some* degree of consistency.

Watts' note. 119 P.

XVI. That the *odes* of *Horace*, and *Psalms* of *David*, in their *manner of composure, spirit, and force*, are much alike ; and equally capable, by the pen of a christian poet, of such transformation, as would make them suitable for christian worship ! Watts, Rem. of time, Works, vol. 7. 433.

This is a specimen of the spirit that pervades the arguments for a human, in place of an inspired system of Psalms. These sentiments held forth by masters in Israel, must have produced, and still continue to produce, a most unhappy effect.

ERRATA.

Page 37. l. 21. for none, read *no*.

53. l. 16. expunge the words, *none of these*, and after were, insert *not*.

82. Note, for Trommill's, read *Trommius*'.

86. l. 17, for are, r. is.

103. l. 22. for derangement r. *imbecility*.

114. Note, l. 2. after universally, r. *read*.

118. l. 3. for furnishes, r. *furnish*.

McMASTER, Gilbert

An apology for the Book of
Psalms, ...

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