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THE  
**EVANGELICAL WITNESS.**

VOL. IV.

**OCTOBER, 1826.**

NO. X.

NOTICE OF BAIRD'S "INQUIRY, AND EXAMINATION,"  
ON THE SUBJECT OF PSALMODY, IN A LETTER TO  
THE EDITOR.

My Dear Sir,—I have just read the last publication of Mr. Baird, on the subject of psalmody.—You request me, as you have not seen the pamphlet, to give you my opinion of its merits. With this I comply, as it furnishes me an opportunity of addressing an old friend, which is always gratifying; and as the form of your request lays me under no obligation to give you a formal and full review of the work, it is hoped a simple opinion, with a few references in justification of it, is all you expect. Indeed, a review, or any thing like a direct notice of Mr. B.'s book, or any thing that could be fairly construed into the appearance of controversy with *him*, is out of the question. My opinion you will easily gather from what follows.

The body of the work consists of six chapters, introduced by a dedication, a kind of double preface, an Introduction—a letter, to whom addressed is not said, and the whole closed up by what, in the style of Mr. Plowden, may be called a *Post-liminous* Advertisement. "All this kind of thing" affords Mr. B. an occasion of telling us, that he has, at least, two reputable gentlemen whom he considers his friends; and likewise of giving the very edifying information of the urgency of friends, the difficulties through which his work had to

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make its way to the public, and withal, what he *has done*, what he *would like* to do, what he *could* do, what he has *not* done, what he *may* do, and what he may *never* attempt to do. A work upon *grace*, which he contemplates at a distance, from such a man, after what many consider a very *ungracious* work, is doubtless a *desideratum*.

Of the work before us, his estimate is far from humble. He expresses a "confidence which he does not effect to conceal," in the "weight and correctness" of his argument, and that his readers "will not have cause to regret the expense of purchase, or the trouble of perusal." Yet he authorizes us to believe, that worthy as his book is, he could have made it much better; for under the urgency of friends, and the calls of the printer, he wrote "*cum calamo currente!*" They gave him time only to *score* some words, and to *interline* others, in the correction of his copy. Thus he informs us, he had no time to make his language better, to expunge repetitions, to better work his arguments. What pity that those solicitous friends, had not given Mr. B. a few years more, in addition to the six or seven, which elapsed between the publication of the "Apology for the Psalms," and his "Examination" of that work, in order that the world might have been favoured with those fine specimens of rhetoric and logic, which he was capable of furnishing.

Let us now come to the matter of his six chapters. The first chapter, contains the author's argument in proof of a *human* psalmody being employed, with divine approbation, by the church in the ages of the patriarchs, from Adam to Moses. (See pp. 23—31.) And how, my dear sir, do you suppose he proceeds? You could hardly divine how he manages his point. He lays down two

tables, a chronological one of Scripture songs, but which refers, likewise to all the expressions of praise, whether by song or otherwise, and to the mention of musical instruments, which came before the author; the second table is a catalogue of Scripture names, nineteen in all, the countries to which they belonged, and a doubtful and defective explanation of their meaning. From them, by a logical process, somewhat new, indeed, but the "weight and correctness" of which, I am yet unable to perceive, he proposes to establish his position. Thus, in proof of it, he adduces the song of the angels, at the laying of the corner stone of the earth, before Adam was created, Job. 38 : 6, 7. His next proof is taken from Tubal, a descendant of Cain, having invented the harp and the organ, Gen. 4 : 21. And in Laban, no very good man either, he finds a witness, for he talked of his mirth, his songs, his tabret, and his harp. Gen. 31 : 27. In this period he places the book of Job; and from the whole, for this is all that his *chronology* furnishes as applicable to the ages before Moses, he deems the proof very satisfactory. Inq. p. 166.

You, sir, may be disposed to think that the song of angels, before man was made, before he had fallen, and before a Saviour was revealed, could teach us very little about an evangelical psalmody; and surely the fact of angels praising God, can decide nothing in favour of human psalmody, in the stated worship of the church. Nor will the fact that Tubal, an excommunicate from the family of God, invented the harp and the organ, appear to you sufficient evidence, that songs of human composition were employed in the worship of the church at that early day. Laban's mirth, and songs, and tabret, and harp, will go, I should

think, a very little way in proof of the divine right of the practice contended for by Mr. B. That the book of Job was then employed in the psalmody of the church, admitting it to belong to that period, no man will affirm. And yet this is the whole proof of this chapter, when we take in his nineteen proper names, *Enos, Mahalaleel, Haddam, Harran Anor, &c.* down to *Anathoth*. This is the proof which Mr. B. is confident "will convince every unbiassed and judicious reader, that songs of human composure—with divine approbation," were employed from the time of Adam, till that of Moses, in the psalmody of the church. What is it, do you ask, in which this satisfactory proof consists? Why, sir, review it. The morning stars sang together before Adam was made, Tubal, an exile from God's house, invented the organ and the harp, Laban, an idolater, was fond of mirth, and with mirth, and song, and harp, and tabret, he said, he would have sent Jacob away had he told him of his departure; and there is the book of Job, a part of our Bible, perhaps the oldest poem in the world. Now, sir, if all this be not sufficient proof of our author's position, let him most triumphantly add, *Enos, Mahalaleel, Hadoram, Harran*, and all the rest of the nineteen names of men, mountains, rivers, cities, and, it would seem, of he knew not what, down to *Anathoth*. This is conclusive? He who feels not the satisfying force of this, in proof of the *jus divinum* of a human psalmody, must, indeed, be *biased*, and without *judgment*!

Mr. B. tells us a tale of a sermon by a Mr. Wallace, on the subject of psalmody, from the *Shibboleth* and *Sibboleth* of Judg. 12: 6. Now, for one, I really do not know how Mr. B.'s argument for a human psalmody, from the names of *Enos, Maha-*

*laleel, Harran, &c.* could be better answered than by repeating the word *Shibboleth*. The one surely meets the other in absurdity. But there is an internal evidence to me, that our author's tale is not just the exact truth. Mr. B.'s assertion, that what he states could be established in a court of justice, increases the doubt upon my mind. We know, for we have seen the value of such proofs in courts of justice, in reference to irreligious contests about religion. But were it all true, our author more than matches his antagonist. Jubal invented the organ and the harp; Laban had *mirth, song, harp,* and *Tabret* at command; *Enos, Arnon, Anothoth*; Therefore hymns of human composition were sung, *jure divino*, from Adam to Moses!!! Find, if you can, sir, any thing in the records of nonsense to match this.\*

The second chapter purports to exhibit the use of human composesures, *jure divino*, in the church's psalmody, from Moses to Christ. He adverts to six songs of which we have mention, and which comes to us under the sanction of divine inspiration, between the call of Israel from Egypt, and the time of David. These, however, prove nothing for the divine right of a human psalmody, and of course must be dismissed from this argument. That such a psalmody existed, Mr. B. presumes, and very confidently refers to instances of its being employed. His first instance, is certainly an

\*That God was praised in his church, since there was one upon earth, and that that praise was offered through the mediation of Christ, are facts admitting of no doubt. The forms in which praise is offered to God are very numerous. Psalmody is only one of them. And, as a stated part of worship, we hear little of it before the days of David. Mr. B. appears to think that whenever God was praised, it must have been by singing. Hence the little sophistry of his argument. The religion of the Bible was, at no time, the little *sing-song* which many seem to think religion should be now.

unfortunate one for his cause; it is the shouts of Israel, in the worship of the golden calf, at Horeb, and the song they sung—*These be thy Gods, O Israel, &c.* p. 32. That this song was not of divine appointment deducts very much from the aptness of it as proof. The assumption that, because Israel made the song addressed to their idol, they, therefore made those addressed to Jehovah, is gratuitous. He refers likewise to “the Book of the wars of the Lord,” Num. 21 : 14, and to the Book of *Joshua*, mentioned Josh. 10 : 13.; but as he knows nothing about these, they being either long since lost, or embodied in books bearing another name, the reference is useless. That either of these books was a collection of poems, is without evidence. Dr. Lightfoot’s conjecture respecting them is as probable as any other, which you know, is far enough from their being books of songs.—Our *inquirer’s* next reference is to the dance of the daughters of Shiloh, Judg. 21 : 21. As this says nothing about psalmody, I leave it. His next instance is that of the timbrels, and the dance of Jephtha’s lovely daughter, Judg. 11 ; 34.; and the salutations of the daughters of Israel, addressed to the son of Jesse, Sam. 18 : 7.; upon the defeat of the Philistines. Does Mr. B. himself, think you, really believe that all of these were exemplifications of solemn religious worship? To hail the victor has been common in all ages and lands; and the civic song of the daughters of Israel, celebrating the heroism of David, is finely illustrated in modern times, as for instance, in the case of our own Washington, by the ladies of Trenton, when, while strewing his way with flowers, they sung,

“Virgins fair and matrons grave,  
 (Then the conquering arm did save!)  
 Build for thee triumphant bowers.

Strew, ye fair, his way with flowers;  
Strew your hero's way with flowers."

In all these cases, we have honours rendered to brave military leaders, successful in their country's cause; but no part of religious worship. In the case of Jephtha's beautiful daughter, there was music and the dance, of song we hear not. The burden of the song of the females of Israel, in the instance before us, was *Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands*. The 1004 songs of Solomon, which are lost, and the funeral wailings of the professional and real mournings of the Jews, it seems to me, prove no more for our Examiner, than the inventions of Jubal, or the doubtful import of Hebrew and Chaldean names. The rest of the chapter is taken up in proof of what no body denies; that psalms should be appropriate to particular subjects and occasions.— We say so too; and we say farther, with Dr. Scott, and many other distinguished men, that we are furnished with inspired songs, suitable to all the subjects and occasions of christian praise.— No friend of inspired psalmody, Mr. B.'s assertion, notwithstanding, to the contrary, ever opposed this. But we say farther still, that a sacred ode may be sung by us, very profitably, though there be some truths in it not literally applicable to every one's present case. That Mr. B. himself does so sometimes, in singing the hymns of his church, is very probable, nay very certain.

I now dismiss the chapter, assuring you, sir, that our *Inquirer* has not adduced a single example of an *uninspired* ode being used in God's worship, during the whole period, from Adam till the Apostolical age, *with* or *without* divine approbation. In that period, many divine songs were indeed composed, and introduced into the service of the church; but among them we know not of one un-

inspired. If there were, when introduced?—by whom?—where is it? The song of the morning stars, Jubal's harp, Laban's mirth and song, the nineteen names, beginning with *Encos*, and ending with *Anathoth*, the unknown book of *Joshua*, even the song addressed to the idol calf, together with all the complimentary expressions, with which heroes were hailed, and all the funeral *Ullalloos* of the singing men and singing women, whether of antiquity or of modern days, will do little, I am disposed to imagine, for this man's cause. And yet he has laboured over many a page, to bring proof of the divine right of his hymns from these sources; and, poor man, I fear he really thinks he has done something to the purpose. He seems to have been encouraged by some indiscreet or waggish companion, to make a book; he made it, as he says, *cum calamo currente*, and truly he has reason to apologize for an argument which should have been '*better wrought.*'

The third chapter of Mr. Baird's book extends from page 48, to page 84; and takes up the proof of a human psalmody being divinely approved, and used, in the Apostolic age. He has recourse, like others before him, to the thanksgiving of Mary, Zecharias, Simeon, the angelic song, the expressions of praise by those who beheld or experienced the healing power of the Redeemer, the extraordinary gifts of the Corinthian church, &c. &c. This, like his other chapters, is confusedly filled. He crowds his pages with quotations from the commentators and historians, some of them partially made, others inappropriate, and the whole useless as to establishing his point. In order to establish his position, from these examples, it behooves Mr. B. to settle, previously, the three following questions: Were these compositions,

whether of saints or angels, really introduced into the psalmody of the church in that age, or sung upon any occasion in her worship? Secondly, were they *human* composures? This Mr. B. will not affirm, and therefore they prove nothing for his assumption. Thirdly, were the compositions of those saints actually *sung* by themselves? Failing in an affirmative answer to any of these questions, his authorities do nothing for him, and failing in all, as he most assuredly does, his cause is hopeless. Give one of those many hymns of human composures, used in that age, give a certain testimony of such being so used, and the cause is gained. This Mr. B. has failed to do, and of course he proves nothing to the point.

The conjecture of Heumannus respecting Eph. 5: 14., is but conjecture, and if that text be understood as an extract from a hymn of human composure, the text itself opposes the conjecture. The Apostle in the quotation refers to no authority less than the inspiration of God. *Wherefore he saith, Awake, &c.* This chapter of our author, though perhaps not so ridiculous as the former ones, is really as inconclusive. You will, I am sure, release me from further notice of it at present.

The fourth and fifth chapters of this book, treat of the history of psalmody, ancient and modern. I do not see, so far as the merits of the question are concerned, much to be gained on this field.—The advocates of an inspired psalmody, at least the author of the “Apology for the Book of Psalms,” admits fully, and I think, as far as justifiable, the early existence and use of hymns of human composure. This admission, is all the other side can prove. History will do nothing in settling the question of divine authority. We must have re-

course to God's own testimony for this; and, from this source, I am persuaded, Mr. B. has failed in bringing such proof as the case demands. The testimony upon the subject, to be gleaned from ancient history is not direct. It is only incidental. The dispute is rather modern than ancient, though not altogether so. The real state of the matter appears to be this: the Book of Psalms had its place as the fixed liturgy of psalmody, in the church. In every congregation, where psalmody was used, duly organized and settled, it was in use. But from a very early period, upon special occasions, individuals made and used occasional hymns. These were sometimes used in certain congregations, in the usual public worship; or, upon the occasion of being called together, they would be frequently used by many individuals, though not in the stated public services of psalmody. But still the Book of Psalms, as the matter of her stated psalmody, had its place in the church, *pre-eminently* above every hymn of human composition. This pre-eminence of place was never disputed, except by a very few enthusiasts, and the occasional hymn of humble pretension, was suffered to pass without animadversion. It is believed that, were all that ancient history says upon the subject brought into one point, this would be the amount of its testimony. That with the hymns of *Nepos* in the 3d century, "many of the brethren were delighted." *Spanheim*, to whom Mr. B. refers, states that the hymns and songs and psalms, besides the Psalms of David, which were brought into the western church, in the 4th century, were "private;" that is, not of public authority; yet they were in the church and very numerous. Mr. B. in this chapter, reasons with his usual sagacity, and abates not in the indications of

diseased temper, over which, he need not have informed his reader, he has too little control. To a few things in this and the foregoing chapters, I may again advert, mean time, I shall give you a peep into Mr. B.'s Sixth and last chapter. This professes to be an examination of Mr. McMaster's "Apology for the Book of Psalms." This might, indeed, have been the title of his whole pamphlet. The Apology and its author are seldom out of his view. Mr. B. discovers an unceasing irritability in reference to that work, and a *snappishness* toward the writer of it not to be accounted for, except on the ground of the wounded vanity of a little mind. Mr. McMasters had represented his "Science of Praise," as inferior to the "Discourse" of Dr. Latta. Mr. B. was treated, in a note of the Apology, as unworthy of notice. He was represented as a *copyist* of Dr. L. Out of these representations Mr. B. has manufactured some *nicknames*, and gives them out as the production of Mr. McM.'s pen. The term *copyist* he makes synonymous with *plagiarist*, and then complains of misrepresentation. What the author of the Apology intended by *copyist* I know not, but as it is not synonymous with *plagiarist*, it is not likely he meant that. *To copy*, in one of its acceptations, means to *imitate*, and of course a *copyist* is an *imitator*. The judgment that Mr. B. falls behind Dr. L. seems to fix this as the idea intended. But it is of little consequence. I hope the Author of the Apology will give credit to Mr. B.'s claim to originality, and soothe so far, the irritation of his feelings. It must however, be noted, that in the "Science of Praise," there was nothing to induce the belief that its author had not seen Dr. L.'s discourse. As to Dr. L.'s superiority over Mr. B. as a writer, I fear this latter work, now before us,

will furnish, if necessary, a lamentable additional proof. He, indeed, in all that marks the gentleman and man of mind *lags* far behind Dr. Latta. It comes not in my way to take notice of the uniform style of crimination, in which Mr. B. speaks of the author of the "Apology." It would be difficult for you to conceive the vice of an author, moral and literary, which is not charged upon the head of Mr. McMaster, and in a form of uncourtliness unsanctioned by even the example of the abusive daily journals of our times; yet it would seem Mr. B. is unconscious of any impropriety of manner, for his pages are much employed in repeating the assurances of the delicacy of his language, and of his freedom from all that is rude.—The frequency and confidence of these charges really induced me to seek a reading of the "Apology for the Psalms," to see whether these things were so. Mr. B.'s want of candour, or self-control, which you please, will be best seen by a perusal of the work he abuses. You do not expect me to enter into details. I may be allowed, however, to advert to a circumstance or two on which our *Inquirer* and *Examiner*, dwells with a sensitiveness, or petulance rather, peculiarly his own; indicating, I should suppose, some latent consciousness of the justness of these remarks under which he seems so sensitive.

The author of the Apology had represented him, and some others, as treating the Book of Psalms with a disrespect amounting to hostility. This Mr. B. in his own *chaste* manner, pronounces a "slanderous falsehood." You will allow me to appeal to those writings in order to ascertain whether this charge of *slander* and *falsehood* be well founded or not.

In turning to the "Discourse on Psalmody," I

find the author representing those churches, and of course the Presbyterians among the rest, which had used, and continued to use the Scripture Psalmody, as *dishonouring* the gospel, and *depriving* the Son of God of those honours given him by the primitive church, Pref. p. 5. And in p. 10, he teaches, that, by those who use the Bible Psalms, "not so much as a single Psalm or Hymn" is sung in conformity with Apostolic direction.— And again, p. 12., that such praise is not offered to God, through the *new and living way*; and of course cannot be accepted. Adhering, he says, p. 29., "strictly to the Old Testament Psalmody, we cannot be said to do *any thing* in the name of the Lord Jesus. 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 access to him. And, p 42., that the influence of the Spirit of God could not be designed to inspire christian converts, with "veneration and respect for the Psalms of David."

Now, sir, can you imagine that it is treating the book of psalms with respect to say, that the use of it in psalmody, dishonours the gospel and deprives the Son of God of those honours once paid him? —that the use of it turns the worshipper to some other object of devotion than the Father, and to some other medium than the Son, for acceptance? —that such is their character, that the Holy Spirit designed not to inspire christians with *veneration* and *respect* for those psalms? Is this the language of respect or of disrespect and hostility? Let the religious world judge. Is it "slandrous falsehood" to say, it is disrespectful.

Without going further, let us hear Mr. Baird himself. I give you a quotation from his "Science of praise," p. 31. "By recommending the

Psalms of David in their" (hymns of human invention,) "stead, under the *specious* argument of their *divine authority*, their minds might be gradually led, from the doctrine of a divine Saviour, to that of a *pattern of piety*," &c.

"The Psalms of David were *properly suited* to such a *designed perversion* of truth. Their application to Christ is *obscure* and *figurative*, and of course they were more easily evaded or misapplied." Mr. B., in his "Inquiry," contends that the language and sentiment of the above quotation are correct, and sufficiently respectful to the Book of Psalms. The author of the "Apology," it seems, thought otherwise, and I mistake if you do not think otherwise too. Is it possible, consistently with due respect for it, to affirm of any portion of God's word, viewed in its proper connection, that it is calculated to lead the mind from the *doctrine* of a divine Saviour? Is the language allowed, in any circumstance, which affirms of a Book of sacred Scripture, that it is "*properly suited* to a *designed perversion* of truth?" You, I am well assured, will say, such language and sentiment are more than disrespectful; and decidedly indicate a spirit of hostility to that against which they are directed. It is not a style similar to that which represents what is good, in itself being liable to be perverted to evil, by a wicked hand; but rather that style which represents a wicked hand employing an evil instrument, "*properly suited*," to the end, for a wicked purpose. It is not true, as Mr. B. asserts, that the grace of God manifested to Abel, was "*properly suited*" to call forth the malignity of Cain's heart; but the reverse is the truth; it was *properly suited* to have repressed that malignity, and to have softened the heart of Cain. Nor was the coming of Christ,

and the promulgation of his gospel *properly suited*, as our author further affirms, to bring wickedness and misery upon the world ; but the reverse. But it is true that the malignity of Cain's heart was *properly suited* to hate the grace of God, bestowed upon his brother and to murder him on that account ; and the wickedness of the world was *properly suited* to lead it to hate Christ, and to persecute his cause and people. And may we not say, without breach of charity, it is further true, that Mr. B.'s ignorance of, and enmity against, the Book of Psalms, were *properly suited* to lead him to affirm, that it was "properly suited to a perversion of truth," in leading the mind "from the doctrine of a divine Saviour"? No explanation can justify the assertion.

But has not Mr. B. explained himself by assigning the *obscurity* and *figurative* character of that Book, as the reason of his assertion? And why did not the author of the "Apology," give the explanation in his quotation? Why he did not, I candidly answer, I do not know ; but I do know if he had, it could have made nothing for Mr. B. To know the value of the reason he assigns, that is, the obscurity of the Book of Psalms, it must be taken in connection with the tenor of thought which prevails throughout his pages, and in that connection, you will perceive it goes as an additional proof of his enmity to the Book of Psalms, in the psalmody of the church, and, in that light, was intended to produce opposition to it in the minds of others. Attend then, sir, to the manner in which he has spoken, in his previous pages, of this inspired book : he represents attachment to the Scripture Psalms as flowing from a Judaizing disposition—*Science of Praise* p. 12.; the use of those psalms by christians, in addressing their

heavenly Father, as an imperfect babyish language, p. 19.; like worshipping in an unknown tongue, p. 37.; he represents their language as *obscure* and *unprofitable*, p. 39.; that the use of it does not honour God, p. 49.; that it is *a yoke of bondage*, p. 71.; and, in the quotation already given, that it is calculated to lead the mind from a divine Saviour, and so *properly suited to a perversion* of truth. The additional sentence, expressive of the *obscurity* &c. of the Book of Psalms, instead of doing away the bad impression, made by his previous affirmation, when taken as it ought to be, in connection with the spirit of his pamphlet, and strain of his language, can be understood in no other light, than as a constituent part of that studied *tirade* of obloquy, which he had all along been pouring upon this portion of the sacred volume, and consequently going to confirm the most unfavourable interpretation that has been put upon his language.

We have not yet done with the evidence of Mr. B.'s hostility against the Book of Psalms. His "Inquiry," gives further evidence of this. In the use of the inspired Psalms, he holds, the Messiah cannot be *owned*, nor God approached through him; for if so, he asks, what was the use of giving a large portion of the New Testament? p. 75.;—that in the use of those psalms, there is no act of worship performed in the name of Christ; for those who used them acted only in common with the Jews who hated Christ." p. 75, 76.; that it is demonstrated, that, in singing those Psalms, there is no confession of Jesus as the Messiah, nor performance of devotion in his name, p. 77.; that the psalms are a part of the *beggarly* elements, p. 152.; that from these beggarly elements, the pastors of the Presbyterian Church are gradually

weaning their members, and that all who refuse to reject these psalms, as beggarly elements, and do not adopt a *new song* are not disposed to honor the Son even as they honour the Father! p. 171. Mr. B. too, by his manner of approving the "Carlisle Hints," which you noticed in vol. 1. of your journal, may be fairly understood as approving of the impious sentiments of that profane pamphlet, in charging upon the Book of Psalms, without disguise, a spirit of *extermination, havoc and destruction*; as having a tendency to foster malevolent feelings, &c. &c.

Will you now, sir, tell me who will affirm that Mr. B. gives not evidence of enmity against the Book of Psalms? With what face can Mr. B. profess friendship to that book, if he really believes what he writes? Can he be attached to that, to which he says none can adhere but from a *Judaizing disposition*? Can he reverence that book which teaches only an imperfect and babyish language, the use of which is like that of an unknown tongue? Can he respect that which he reckons so obscure and unprofitable?—which does not honour God?—which is a yoke of bondage?—which contains no hymn to the Saviour as God?—the use of which does not own the Redeemer?—which leads him, not by the Son, to the Father?—which conducts to act in common with the Jew who hated Christ?—which is beggarly?—Can he love that book which under any circumstances, would lead the mind from the doctrine of a divine Saviour, and is *properly suited* to such a *perversion* of truth? Can he be cordial to that book, which would keep him from worshipping the Son even as the Father? Can he regard those Psalms, from attachment to which, he says, he and others

are gradually weaning the people, as from beggarly elements? Most assuredly not.

These sentiments, now under notice, give body and spirit to Mr. B.'s scheme of Psalmody. Take them away and nothing remains. He nevertheless, occasionally professes regard to the Book of Psalms. My dear sir, is there no reason to suspect, in these occasional professions, something of the hollowness of hypocrisy? Something of the meanness of pious fraud, to still, in the meantime, the fears of those whom he is employed in bringing off, gradually, from these *beggarly elements* of a Bible Psalmody? Think you differently? Is he still an honest man? Is your charity for his heart at the expense of respect for his head? Be it so, then. Let the exclamation of the fox in the fable, furnish his apology: *ωσει κεφαλη και εγκεφαλον ουκ εχει!*

I purposed to have noticed to you some instances of Mr. B.'s uniform want of candour, in the treatment of the subject before him; such as in his proposed attack on the first argument of the Apology for the Book of Psalms, which he takes care to keep out of view, falling only upon some collateral considerations, the historical state of the question so far as disputed, which he certainly misrepresents; and his claims to originality were they not too silly to be laughed at, might have been noticed. His representations are too uniformly at variance with truth, to be ascribed to mere oversight, were we not to admit his apology of the urgency of friends, the speed and demands of the press, the unmanageable rapidity of his pen, for he assures us he was obliged *literally* and *truly* to write *cum calamo currente*, and his less un-

manageable temper,\* all combined to allow him no time for the correction of his copy, or the better working of his argument; except to *score* and *interline* a little. To treat with severity a book written under such circumstances, you could not have the heart, and to give credit to its statements no man of candour will be disposed.

Now, my dear sir, do you still ask my opinion of this pamphlet? If so, permit me to say to you, its literary character invites neither pleasure nor animadversion. It is lower than contemptible. Its moral bearings are deplorable, when it is recollected that it is the production of an actual minister of a respectable denomination of christians. It is the lowest production upon the subject, if we except the profuse 'Hints' from the Carlisle author, which Mr. B. so highly eulogizes. That such a book should really have appeared, at this day, will not be readily believed by those who have not read it, or who have not confidence in the report of those who have.

Your goodness, when you know the merits of the pamphlet, will, I trust, excuse the frequent absence of gravity which will have appeared to you in reading this letter. You, sir, serious as you are, could not be always grave, with the odd mixture of vanity, petulance, nonsense, pretension, and *gossiping tales*, served up before you in the pages of Mr. B. Had I supposed the thing likely to do any harm, I would, had none other done it, have noticed it gravely; but those for whom he said he wrote, the ignorant, it will not hurt, and to those of another description it is not calculated to do either good or evil. It is indeed a harmless thing.

\* "All censure of man's self is oblique praise. It is in order to show how much he can spare. It has all the invidiousness of self praise, and all the reproach of falsehood." Believing this opinion of a distinguished man to be correct, I am induced to notice Mr. B.'s foolish complaint to the public on his infirmity of temper.

The existence, nevertheless, of this subject of controversy, in the church, is to be lamented. Had the modern pursued the course of the ancient church, in continuing to the Book of Psalms its prominent place, as the stated liturgy of her psalmody, some of her children employing an occasional hymn if they pleased, of modern make on a particular occasion, controversy on the subject would never have been known. And when those who have deviated from the ancient path, shall have retraced their steps, the matter of dispute will be reduced to narrow bounds. We hope the day when it shall be so is rapidly approaching. Distinguished men in the churches, do not believe the assertions of those rash men who affirm, that all who employ in their psalmody the Book of Psalms, dishonour the Gospel, do not honour the Son as they honour the Father, and address not God through the name of Christ. They would not thus put under *ban* the Presbyterian Churches of the Reformation: the Church of Holland, the Church of France, the Church of Scotland down till this day, the whole Presbyterian interest of Ireland, the Presbyterian Church in the United States till a very late day, and even till this day, not to mention the Secession Church, the Associate Reformed, and Reformed Presbyterian Churches. Such may be the views of Mr. Baird and a few like him; but such cannot be the views of the sound and reflecting men, particularly of the Presbyterian Church. Such cannot be the views of our Greens, our Alexanders, our Millers, our Blatchfords, &c. These gentlemen well know that a *literal* version of the Book of Psalms is authorized by their supreme ecclesiastical judicatory, as a fit liturgy of evangelical Psalmody, both by their ancient practice and by their act of 1787; and by

the same authority is prohibited the censuring of that version. Now, sir, can you believe that such men as those adverted to above, who sway the policy of the General Assembly, did they view the Book of Psalms as a part of the *yoke of bondage*, as a *beggarly element* as *not honouring* Christ; as leading, in the use of it, to God in any other way than in the name of Christ; you would not only suffer it, but by authority put it into the hands of their people as their liturgy of sacred song? No, no: such opinions are the 'effusions' of ignorance or the ebullitions of a suppressed infidelity. That they are not noticed and silenced by the authority of the church may perhaps be accounted for, by the insignificance of their authors. My dear sir, you see my sheet is full, and I doubt not you are glad to see the conclusion in a cordial farewell.

Rev. J. R. Willson.

June 2nd, 1826.

*Note.*—Since writing the above, I have read a lengthened account of some public debates between several Protestant Clergymen and a number of Roman Catholic Priests, upon the propriety of Bible Societies circulating, and putting into the hands of the people, indiscriminately, the Bible without note or comment. I was struck very forcibly with the similarity of the topics of argument employed by the Catholics, against the circulating of the scriptures, and those of Mr. B. against the use of the Book of Psalms in the Church's psalmody. The *obscurity* of the matter, the *imperfection* of the written word, the necessity of *something* else, the *defects* of the English version, and the consequent *danger* to the people, were the prominent topics of argument used by the *Catholics*; and these are the chief topics selected by Mr. B. Like him, too, they were offended, when their conduct

was represented as inimical to the Bible. He and they, however, have their dissimilarities; the language of the Catholics is less offensive, and they sufficiently indicate that it was men of sense managing a bad cause.

DIALOGUE ON EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION.

*Paul.* The sermon, William, which we heard yesterday, was calculated to make a deep impression on a reflecting audience. How important is the question asked in the text, "Who shall ascend into the hill of God?"

*William.* It was, indeed, and on me it did make a deep impression. I am glad that you have introduced this topic. This morning I feel its power with nearly the same force as when the preacher was giving utterance to its solemn truths.

*P.* That is what I fear few hearers of the gospel can say on Monday morning. Most of them are "like a man beholding his natural face in a glass, who straightway departeth and forgetteth what manner of man he was." How few are there who "lay up the word in their hearts and practice it in their lives!"

*W.* This is a neglect of which I have often been guilty. Though it is some years now since I made a profession of religion, and though I was much moved on the occasion of my first appearance at the communion table, yet I have heard many excellent sermons with great coldness, and have soon forgotten, what I heard.

*P.* Few, there is reason to fear, can entirely acquit themselves of blame on this quarter. A defect on this point is commonly imputed to a natural lack of memory, while the fault lies in inattention and want of love to the truth,

*W.* So great has been my languor and coldness

THE  
**EVANGELICAL**  
**WITNESS.**

PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF THE AMERICAN  
EVANGELICAL TRACT SOCIETY.

EDITED BY  
**JAMES R. WILLSON, A.M.**

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Having, therefore, obtained help of God, I continue until this day  
witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than  
those which the Prophets and Moses did say. *Acts xxvi. 23*

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PUBLISHED MONTHLY.

**VOL. IV.**

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NEWBURGH, N. Y.

PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF THE N. B. GAZETTE, BY  
PARMENTER & SPALDING.

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1826.

