



N. P. Bennett writes me that the comments of this description, in the abridgement of W. L. G. Bennett in the editorial chair of the Telegraph. The controversy was commenced by W. Bennett - concerning the songs of

Both Sides of the Question:
From "Thoughts on a Review. Having answered the "Editor" the articles in reply to Mr. Lawson were placed in the Editorial Columns, and

A CORRESPONDENCE
without any signature. Mr. Lawson it will be perceived by the attentive reader to have suspected this. "Skulk" behind a "nom de plume" is an indication. It

PSALMODY

There was W. Bennett's design to "Skulk" in any way. The certain instances of his position explain the whole matter. James Bennett The Editor of the "Daily Telegraph,"

ST. JOHN, N. B.,

AND

REV. J. R. LAWSON,

BARNESVILLE, N. B.



PREFATORY NOTE.

The following pages are a reprint of a recent correspondence published in the columns of the *Daily Telegraph*, St. John, N. B. There is also added a letter, for which, it is presumed, the Editor could not find room in his crowded sheets, and which he did not think proper to notice. Although the discussion has no claim to be considered exhaustive of the subject of Psalmody, it is hoped that, in this consolidated form, it may serve to awaken a deeper interest in the question, and assist unprejudiced inquirers in the investigation of it. Confident that truth is mighty, and must ultimately prevail, the whole correspondence is submitted to the calm, unprejudiced, and prayerful consideration of every reader, who desires to know the truth that he may walk in conformity with it.

J. R. LAWSON.



THE SONGS OF ZION.

The *Daily Telegraph* 23rd Oct., 1879.

"The Songs of Zion the only Manual of Praise" is the title of a neat little pamphlet from the pen of the Rev. J. R. Lawson, printed at this office, and published by R. A. H. Morrow, Charlotte street, St. John. The author thinks that we ought only to sing the Psalms of David in public worship. The thesis which he proposes to maintain is:—"The Psalms of David in the best metrical translation available or chanted in prose, should be used in the service of praise to the exclusion of all other compositions, whatever may be their literary, poetical or doctrinal excellencies." His first argument is: "The inspired psalms are quite sufficient for all the purposes for which a manual of praise is required." In support of this position, he makes quotations from several eminent writers, which go to show that the psalms are excellent, as expressing the sentiments of the human heart; and which, Mr. Lawson thinks, justify the conclusion that they are "a perfect medium through which to express our sorrows, joys, aspirations, hopes, and that no other vehicle of praise to God is needed." Now, while agreeing with the eulogies of the authors quoted, we demur to the conclusion. A very good thing does not imply that even a less worthy thing in the same line may not be useful. Let us eulogize a peach never so much, we are not to be supposed to be insensible to the qualities of a pear. Horne, Luther, Calvin, Edwards and Gladstone, who are quoted by Mr. L., would, we believe, each of them think, or have thought, it strange that their words should be held to imply that no other songs than those of David and his co-psalmists should ever be used in the church. But let us hear Mr. Lawson's second argument: "The Psalms of David have the Divine appointment," by which the author means that "they were given by inspiration of God to be the subject matter of the church's praise." If he had said the Jewish Church's praise, the position might be admitted. There is just the same authority for the use of the Psalms that there is for the Temple itself, its sacrifices and instruments of service, including the cymbals, psalteries, etc., and no more. That they are used in the praise of God now is because of the adaptedness of many of them for that purpose; because of their imperishable worth as expressive of the attributes and character of God, and of the hopes, fears, aspirations and penitence of the human heart. Others of the Psalms are by most people felt not to be so adapted, in view of the changed circumstances of the church, and are, as a rule, not sung. When they are sung by Mr. Lawson it is only when he has by his "explanations" adapted them to the sentiments of his people—translated them out of history into figure, giving them sometimes a meaning, we fear, which was never contemplated by the sweet singer who composed them—a *fallible* meaning certainly, in which case the congregation would be called on to sing not merely an uninspired but

possibly a fictitious psalm, and so become guilty of worse than that will worship which is frequently charged on those who sing hymns or paraphrases in public service.

The third argument of Mr. Lawson is that "No other book of spiritual songs has the same Divine authority. There is no book of Psalms in the New Testament, nor any raised up to write psalms as to write Gospels and Epistles, and no intimation that the Redeemer would raise up such." And then it is further affirmed that "Ascension gifts did not include hymn-makers."

Now, first, we say there is the germ of a hymn book in the New Testament. The songs of Mary, Simeon, Zacharius and of John, are at least a beginning of such hymn book. Second, the Jewish worship was instituted and conducted for several hundreds of years before any regular service of song was instituted at all, it having been first introduced by David and practised in front of the tabernacle, and there was no "intimation" given that any would be raised up for the purpose of giving to the Jewish church the service of song, and instrumental music as well, till it was about to become an accomplished fact. Third, ascension gifts included prophecy, (in the broad sense of that term) which, in men naturally endowed with the poetic faculty, frequently takes the rhythmic form, and in the truly spiritual man becomes inspiration, though not in the sense of becoming authoritative. It is the province of the discerners of spirits in the church to separate the wheat from the chaff here; and in this way the hymns of the ages have been, and are being, prepared for the use of the church. God has not left this great want of a vehicle of Christian praise unprovided for. Hymns of mere human composition we object to, but hymns, which have proceeded from a spiritual prophetic man, upon and into whom the Spirit of God has breathed, and whom He has anointed and sealed, are not merely human. They have in them a divine element, which makes them worthy to be sung by the multitudes of one heart and one mind, with their sentiments, because they have all been baptized by and into the one spirit.

Mr. L. next considers objections to the exclusive use of the Psalms in Christian worship. One of these is that the name of Jesus is not to be found in them. This objection he calls frivolous, as Christ is in them under other names. We consider it fatal, not to the use of the Psalms, but to the exclusion of all other hymns. Is it not a strange fact that in exclusively psalm-singing congregations, met for the purpose of worshipping God through Christ, His proper name, so expressive of His office and sweet to the believer's ear, cannot be heard once in their songs of praise? This one fact shows how untenable is the thesis Mr. L. proposes to establish.

Mr. L. thinks that an objection grounded on the Jewish phraseology of the Psalms does not hold good, as the objection would be equally strong against reading them. This is a mistake. What is good for instruction may yet be inappropriate for song. The want of simplicity and the need of explication are quite opposed to the true exercise of praise. It is needless to dwell on a distinction so palpable.

Passing by the objection against the imprecatory psalms, and also the questionable criticism about "the psalms, hymns and spiritual songs,"

we come to the objection made against the exclusive use of the psalms, that if we are authorized to make our own prayers we are surely at liberty to make our own songs of praise. "This objection," Mr. L. says, "arises from confusion of thought. . . . These ordinances, he says, are essentially distinct in their nature. In prayer we make known our wants, these are ever varying and our petitions must vary also. . . . In praise, however, the case is different. The great Object of praise is continually the same. The praises that are suitable at one time are suitable at another, etc." Now if prayer were always restricted to the making known our wants and praise always to ascriptions of honor and glory to the great Object of our worship there would be at least some appearance of point in Mr. Lawson's reply. Mr. L., however, knows that in our prayers we adore, confess, and ascribe glory to the hearer of prayer, as well as express our wants and, on the other hand, he as well knows that praise, so far from being confined to ascriptions of glory to the unchangeable God, takes quite as wide a range as prayer and frequently includes the petition itself. The Object of praise is the same, but the subjects of praise are as various and multitudinous as the subjects of prayer. Each day may present a varied theme of song as it presents various causes of thankfulness, or of joy, or of hope, from the believer's experience. Mr. Lawson, by his arbitrary distinction, utterly contrary to the real facts, finds confusion which he himself has caused. We need not further criticise this little work or notice further objections and replies. We have said enough to show the utter baselessness of the argument for the "exclusive" use of the Psalms in public worship. If it were possible to maintain the argument, we may be sure that vastly better reasons would have been adduced by the gifted author than are to be found in "The Songs of Zion; the only Manual of Praise."

James B. Smith

To the Editor of the *Daily Telegraph*.

BARNESVILLE, Nov. 3, 1879.

SIR:—A late issue of the *Telegraph* contains a review of my little pamphlet on Psalmody. Will you be so kind as to allow me space for a brief reply? Whilst acknowledging the superior excellency of the Psalms, as testified to by such writers as Horne, Luther, Calvin, etc., the reviewer demurs to the conclusion, that they ought to be exclusively used in praise. He says: "A very good thing does not imply that even a less worthy thing in the same line may not be useful." Now, whilst that is a mere truism in many applications of it; in the case before us it will not hold good. The question on hand is not one of mere taste. It is not one concerning the use of such things as peaches and pears. It is a question of acceptance with God in the sublimest devotional service in which one can engage. In its application to such a question, the principle is unscriptural. It is subversive of the great principle of the Bible, that God is always to have the *best*. In the olden time, everything offered to Him was to be the best of its kind. For any one to admit, then, that the Psalms are the best in the line of Sacred songs, and yet to affirm, that an inferior article in the same line may be used

in worship, either in lieu of them or supplementary to them, is in utter antagonism both to reason and scripture.

In reference to my second proposition, the reviewer says: "There is just the same authority for the use of the Psalms that there is for the Temple itself, its sacrifices and instruments of service, including the cymbals, psalteries, &c., and no more." Now, if the writer be thoroughly honest in that conviction he must clamor to have that old Jewish Psalm Book cast out of the Sanctuary entirely. All will admit that there is now no authority for the temple and the temple service; and for any one to attempt to restore it, in the Christian church, would be an anti-christian return to Judaism. If the use of the Psalms, then, has no more authority than the "beggarly elements" of a superannuated economy, why does not the reviewer, consistently with his convictions, contend not merely against their exclusive use but any use of them, more especially as it is an established principle of the Bible, that what is not authorised in the worship of God is forbidden, and is sinful. Is the reviewer prepared to take up that position? If not, then he is not true to his thesis. But is it so that the Bible Psalms are Jewish and therefore now abrogated? I most emphatically deny it. They formed no peculiarity of the Jewish ritual. They were intended for the church of God in every age and dispensation succeeding the time of David. According to the testimony of Edwards—endorsed too by the reviewer in strange inconsistency with his position—"they were penned for the use of the church of God in its public worship not only in that age but in other ages, as being fitted to express the religion of all saints, in all ages." By divine direction they were collected into volumes and labelled "The Book of Psalms," at the time when the Jewish economy was near its close, demonstrating that they were not intended solely for the dispensation that was so soon to end, but also for that which was about to be inaugurated. The Redeemer when He came to set up the Christian church gave no hint that the ancient Psalms would be abrogated. On the contrary, He honored the Psalms by quoting from them, by singing portions of six of them at the last Passover; and His soul passed away to glory on the wings of a portion of David's Psalms—"Father into thy hands I commend my spirit." Paul was as much opposed as any one could be, to the introduction of Jewish rites into the Christian church, and yet by his apostolic authority, he enjoined the use of the Psalms. The early Christians, under the very eye of the apostle, used the Psalms and, as far as the evidence goes, exclusively. According to the testimony of the most reliable historians, the Psalms of the Synagogue passed over to the Christian church, and if the reviewer can trace a single un-inspired hymn in use in the church farther back than the close of the 2nd century, he will have accomplished a rich feat in archaeology.

In his attempt to set aside my third proposition, the reviewer is peculiarly fanciful. He speaks of what he calls "the songs of Mary, Simeon, Zacharias, and of John," as the beginning of a Christian hymn book. Strange reasoning! "Mary *said*." "Simeon blessed God and *said*." "Zacharias * * * prophesied *saying*." The reviewer has discovered that all this means singing hymns! His reference to prophesying, as including hymn-making, is nothing but a fancy. There is but

one thing lacking to make the argument convincing, viz.: proof. I could scarcely conceive of any mode of reasoning more unfortunate for the cause of the reviewer than his definition of a *divine* composition as contrasted with that which is merely *human*. According to his theory, the only thing that is essential to constitute a hymn *divine* is that it proceed from a "spiritual prophetic man." Such a hymn is *divine*, and may be sung, whilst every other poetic composition is merely *human*, and should not be sung. The spiritual character of the composer is that which determines the character of the composition. Now, according to that theory, before that one can sing any hymn with confidence, he must infallibly know the moral state of the composer, and have infallible evidence that he was a "spiritual prophetic man." But is it possible for one to attain to that certainty? Most assuredly not. Therefore, according to that definition, there is no hymn-singer in existence, who can have any certainty that he is not singing a merely human composition, which even the reviewer would not use in praise. There is only one book that he can use confidently, as meeting the requisite condition of a *divine* composition. It is the Book of Psalms. In singing these Psalms we are assured that they have proceeded from "a spiritual prophetic man, upon and into whom the Spirit of God breathed, and whom He anointed and sealed." In singing those Psalms, we are assured that we are not using the utterances of fallible man, but the words of the Holy Ghost.

I have only further to remark that the reviewer's reference to Mr. Lawson and his "explanations" is a misrepresentation. Mr. L., in his "explanation" of the Psalms, does not adapt them to "the sentiments of his people;" he tries to adapt the sentiments of his people to them. He does not try to fit the Psalms for the people, but the people for the Psalms. Mr. L. never arbitrarily calls the people to sing according to his "explanations," but according to the evident meaning of the inspired words, to the right apprehension of which, his "explanations" may possibly assist them, by the blessing of the Great Teacher.

J. R. LAWSON.

The *Daily Telegraph* 19th Nov., 1879.

Mr. Lawson thinks that our illustration of the comparative merits of the Psalms and Hymns, as peach and pear, will not hold. Why not? Because several good men spoke highly of the psalms, and Mr. Lawson drew the conclusion that they would have nothing to do with any other poetical compositions as matter of praise, and to show the absurdity of such a conclusion we affirmed, under a similitude that such a conclusion was unwarranted. The praise of the peach does not prevent one from acknowledging the excellent qualities of the pear. No more does the high meed of approbation of the authors quoted imply Mr. Lawson's conclusion that they would have nothing else sung in public Christian worship.

What Mr. Lawson says about giving to God the best we heartily endorse. To use the former illustration, we would that He should have the best peaches and the best pears too. Give us all the best psalms,

and the very best hymns from the pens of spiritual men, selected by "discerners of spirits" in the church, full of fervor and piety and sound doctrine, and which will not need Mr. Lawson's "explanations" to fit either them to his audience or his audience to them. This we think would be an improvement on the singing of such psalms as require a quarter or half an hour to get the hearers "insensed" into their meaning.

Mr. Lawson is, we think, mistaken when he says that he does "not adapt the psalms to the sentiments of the people but tries to adapt the sentiments of the people to them." Here is a verse:—

Yea happy surely shall he be,
Thy tender little ones,
Who shall lay hold upon and them
Shall dash against the stones.

Now, however much the sentiment of this verse was in accord with the Jewish captives' mind, irritated and maddened by the treatment of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, it is not in accord, we humbly submit, with the Christian sentiment of the people of Barnesville, and needs adaptation as their song to the better spirit which Christians ought to cherish to those who have done them great wrong.

Mr. Lawson does not seem to have noted our reason for the continuance of many of the Psalms—their own excellence and imperishable worth. If Mr. Lawson can prove to us that any part of the old Jewish service is of such worth—say the musical instruments—we shall take them in along with the psalms. As to the "blood of bulls and of goats," the church had enough of that. It is lawful and right to discriminate between what is and is not of moral obligation.

Mr. Lawson says: "By divine direction they were collected into volumes and labelled "The Book of Psalms" at the time when the Jewish Economy was near its close, demonstrating that they were not intended solely for the dispensation which was so soon to end, but also for that which was about to be inaugurated.

Will Mr. Lawson be so good as give us his authority for saying that this collection and labelling were done by divine direction, and the exact date of the decree? We shall wait with interest for his reply. In the mean time as this is a somewhat important point, we waive notice of other assumptions and objections till we get some solid ground to tread upon.

James B. Smith

To the Editor of the *Daily Telegraph*.

SIR:—I have no objection to the most searching criticism, but I have decided objections to misrepresentation. To say that I introduced quotations from Horne, Luther, Calvin, etc., to prove that they sang nothing but Psalms is not true. Any one who reads my pamphlet will see that I gave quotations from their writings, simply to show what they thought of the subject matter of the Psalms, and not to show what their practice was.

I did not say that the Psalms "were collected into volumes." This is one of a plurality of typographical errors in my communication. I said

in my manuscript that they were, by Divine direction, collected into a volume and labelled "the Book of Psalms," at the time when the Jewish economy was near its close. The only authority that I have for making that statement is that of inference. I cannot give the exact day and date of the decree appointing Ezra, or any one else, to that work, any more than I could furnish the decree appointing David to write the 119th Psalm, or Paul to write the epistle to the Romans. I find, however, the Apostles recognising that book of Psalms, and recognising the very order in which the Psalms are located in the collection, and I draw the inference that whether there was a special decree or not in the matter, the Psalms thus collected bore the sanction of divine authority. That the compilation was not made anterior to the time of the Babylonish captivity will not be disputed by the editor of the *Telegraph*, who ascribes one of the Psalms in the volume to the irritated state of the captives by the treatment of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. I still adhere to the proposition that the gathering of the formerly scattered Psalms into a separate book and labelled the "Book of Psalms," at a time so far on in the old economy, furnishes, at least, presumptive evidence that they were intended not merely for the *Jewish*, but also for the *Christian* dispensation that was so soon to be inaugurated.

It certainly will not appear strange that persons of "weaker capacity" should require a little "explanation" of the Psalms, when the conductor of an influential journal is so unenlightened in regard to the spirit and meaning of some of them. When he represents any of them as the breathing of an "irritated and maddened" spirit, he furnishes indubitable evidence that he needs more than a "quarter" or even a "half hour's explanation" to "insense" him into their *right* meaning. A verse is quoted by you from one of the Psalms. Here is another from the New Testament, "Reward her as she rewarded you; double unto her double." These words come from Heaven the region of unmingled purity. What do you think of them? Are they the breathings of an "irritated and maddened" spirit? Are they inconsistent with the true Christian sentiment? Many similar and stronger utterances I can furnish from the Christian Scriptures. Were the writers and speakers "irritated and maddened?"

It is a fearful theological blunder for one to speak of any of the Psalms as breathing forth "threatenings and slaughter" against *personal* enemies. They were dictated by the Holy Spirit who was no more malignant in Jewish times than He is now. In language no stronger than that of the Christian Scriptures, they denounce the judgments of the Almighty on the impenitent, malignant, and persecuting enemies of His church and cause. If any one is not prepared to sing them according to this, their true spirit and meaning, there is something that he needs far more than a half hour's "explanation" to fit him for the exercise—true love to Christ and zeal for His glory.

J. R. LAWSON.

Barnesville, Nov. 14th, 1879.

The *Daily Telegraph* Dec., 1880.

We present to our readers another letter on this subject from the Rev. J. R. Lawson. He seems to think that he has not been properly represented in our remarks, but if he will only reflect a little, he will see that we did not misrepresent him when we inferred that, to make his quotations from Horne, Luther, Calvin, etc., sustain his thesis—that the Psalms should be exclusively sung in Christian worship—the implication must be that they held to the exclusive system of Mr. Lawson. Otherwise the quotations have no force. Why Mr. Lawson, in his former letter, will have it that, because we admire and endorse the sentiments quoted, we should also become exclusive psalm-singers.

Accepting Mr. Lawson's correction of volume for volumes, we do not see that his case is greatly improved. Mr. Lawson spoke in his former letter with so much particularity and authority of the divine direction about the collection called the Psalms, its title, its labelling, etc., that we thought we were about to get some new information on a very important subject. But all we have received is an inference—very good, indeed, provided the data be correct and the deduction be without flaw. When, however, we find Mr. Lawson crediting David with being the author of the 119th Psalm, while the evidence applicable to the case is utterly opposed to that conclusion, we are disposed to ask proof of his assertions. The authorship and inspiration of the Epistle to the Romans is undoubted, the evidence that St. Paul was the writer being overwhelming, its contents being the evidence of their source. If Mr. Lawson has no better evidence of the divine authority for the collecting and labelling of the book of Psalms than for the divine authority to David to write the 119th Psalm, he has none at all; and if he has as good evidence for these mechanical operations as he has for the inspiration of Paul in writing the Epistle to the Romans, we should be glad to see it produced. That the book of Psalms was completed either by Ezra, or by some one else, sometime subsequent to the captivity—how long after we know not, though certainly before the coming of Christ—is admitted. That some of the apostles refer to them as "the Book of Psalms," we also admit. But how far all this is from furnishing the inference of divine authority for the collection and labelling, every one must see—except we affirm that the recognition of a fact as such by apostolic authority must imply a divine origin; of course not merely providential, but inspired. But the collecting and labelling are only preliminary. The divine appointment of them to be sung in the collected and labelled form is another presumption, grounded on the fact that they were—at least some of them, and perhaps all of them—sung in the temple services. But these inferences are nothing compared with the other two, which are necessary to make Mr. Lawson's arguments of any force: 1st. That they were divinely appointed to be sung in the Christian Church to the end of time, and 2nd. That no other psalms, hymns or spiritual songs were ever to be so sung in the Christian Church. There is no evidence that there ever was any divine appointment of the kind. To argue that the introduction of the completed book shortly before the conclusion of the Jewish dispensation is any probable proof that it was to be the

subject matter of the Christian Church's praise for all time is extremely futile. Even from the time of Ezra there were still several hundred years of usefulness for the collection at a time, too, when prophecy was dormant and when disasters required the spirit-stirring melodies of the Jewish Bards. So that the *cui bono* argument is answered at once without supposing they were to be used in the Christian Church. Then, too, though the full collection was not made up till or after Ezra's time yet most probably a collection so labelled or perhaps otherwise labelled had been doing service in the Jewish Church from the time of David, to which was added, each new song judged worthy of a place, in the book by those who had the oversight of the service of praise.

If Mr. Lawson will manfully give himself to the task before him and show us by authority or necessary inference, and not mere assumption, that the Psalms were to be exclusively sung in the Christian Church we shall sit at his feet. So far we must say with the Scottish Jury, "not proven," Mr. Lawson.

Mr. Lawson thinks that because he can quote passages out of the New Testament, in which are denunciations of judgments of the Almighty on the enemies of His church and cause stronger, as he thinks, than the verse about dashing the little ones of Babylon against the stones, that we are bound to accept these dreadful comminations as the matter of our praise. But no; Mr. Lawson will not let us do that with similar passages in the New Testament. We may do that with the song about Babylon, but not with the denunciations of mystical Babylon. We are glad for Mr. Lawson's sake, considering the position he assumes in his "explanations" that he has not also to explain the passage which he quotes from Revelations. As a matter of curiosity, indeed we would like to hear Mr. Lawson's comment on that text—"Reward her as she hath rewarded you. Double unto her double." Prior to reading Mr. Lawson's present letter we would have supposed that he would have told his audience of "weak capacity," that they should not account Cyrus or Alexander or any of the other tyrants who wreaked the vengeance of heaven on Babylonish infants, as particularly happy on that account, but that these who should destroy the offspring of the mystical Babylon would certainly have much joy. We would have been sure that Mr. Lawson would have repudiated the idea that it was a joy-bearing thing to dash the head of any child, of Nebuchadnezzar or Belshazzar, against the stones; and we certainly would never have thought that he would think of "rewarding" the representatives of the other Babylon by treating them to double intensified thumbscrews, racks, red-hot pinchers, fires and other tortures. We had supposed he would, while admitting the righteousness of the judgments of God on Babylon, tell his hearers that for our improvement we must make Babylon the representative of confusion, sin and crime before we can pronounce him happy who kills ruthlessly her infant products. This is the adaptation of the Psalms to his audience credited by us to Mr. Lawson. We never supposed that he could or would try to adapt his audience to the sentiment as presented in the literal and etymological meaning. We hope still, notwithstanding what he says about their application to "the impenitent, malignant and persecuting enemies of His church and cause," and concerning singing

them "according to their true spirit and meaning," that he would not consider himself particularly happy had he been the chosen instrument to break the Babylonish children's heads, although that is the true outcome of the passage in its apparent signification; nor do we think he would like to preside over a new Inquisition erected for the purpose of rendering double pain to the representatives of the old persecutors, according to the command, "Render unto her double."

If Mr. Lawson does not in some such way adapt the Psalms to his congregation, we are sorry for both him and them. If he does, there will not be much harm, perhaps, in the singing of such a passage, even in the white heat of enthusiasm, though it is to be observed that the literal signification will, after it has been evicted, come back like the ghost of Banquo, to take the seat prepared for another, marring, at least, the harmonies of the heart, if not the song.

We must confess that, while we hold that all Christians must accept all the truths of revelation, we think most persons would feel more edified by singing some of the time-honored Christian hymns, dear to the whole Christian world, than by the use of those imprecations which Mr. Lawson contends are part of the only proper matter of the Church's praise. The argument in favor of Christianity derived from internal evidence is addressed to the Christian consciousness. If the same consciousness be appealed to on the subject of the propriety of singing such hymns as those beginning, "Just as I am," "Nearer, my God, to Thee," "Rock of Ages," etc., etc., we think it will proclaim in favor of such hymns; and that it would greatly prefer them to those containing the imprecations to which we refer. Yet, according to Mr. Lawson, it is actually immoral to sing such hymns in Christian worship!

We have well weighed the consequence of making the above admission. Mr. Lawson, from his lofty standpoint may say "it is a fearful theological blunder," and he may see in it, as he does, convincing evidence of a want of "true love to Christ, and zeal for His cause." All we shall say on this subject is that we sincerely hope that "true love to Christ and zeal for His cause" are not confined to the small, but excellent body of people who contend that the entire contents of the Book of Psalms should all be sung, in Christian worship, and that no other songs of praise, not even the brief inspired songs of the New Testament should be so sung. If the contrary were the case, the outlook for the Christian Church would be so gloomy that we think even Mr. Lawson himself, when exercising the Christian charity which we gladly accord to him, would lament and mourn over it.

James P. Smith

To the Editor of the *Daily Telegraph*.

SIR:—I am sorry to have to refer again to such a small matter, but I must once more call your attention to your error in dealing with my quotations from Horne, Luther, etc. I did not infer from the testimonies of these writers, that they restricted themselves to the Psalms in praise, any more than I inferred from your endorsement of their

testimonies, that you are a Psalm singer exclusively. I argued from their eulogies that, to be consistent with themselves, they ought to have been Psalm singers, just as I argue from your agreement with their eulogies that, to be consistent with your own admissions, you ought to be exclusively a Psalm singer also. It is an established principle of the Bible—admitted by yourself—that the great Object of worship must always have the best, not the best occasionally, but the best always; and as divine songs are infinitely superior to the compositions of fallible men, as testified to by Horne, Luther, Calvin, and the editor of the *Telegraph*, does it not follow as a legitimate consequence, that they ought to be exclusively used in Christian praise? On this subject, the excellent Romaine, one of the brightest stars in the English church, thus writes: “I want a name for that man who should pretend that he could make better hymns than the Holy Ghost. His collection is large enough; it wants no addition. It is as perfect as its author, and not capable of any improvement. Why, in such a case, would any man in the world take it into his head to sit down and write hymns for the use of the church.” To this subject I ask the earnest and unprejudiced attention of your readers.

That the Psalms—previously scattered—were collected into a separate volume towards the end of the Babylonish captivity; that the volume was styled the Book of Psalms; that it was recognized by the Saviour and His apostles as a distinct book of the inspired Canon; that it was quoted by them in proof of certain articles of the Christian faith, even in the very order in which the Psalms are located in the collection (see Acts xiii.: 33, 55); these are the facts, admitted by yourself, from which I derived the inference—certainly not a wild one—that it was with the Divine sanction that the compilation was made—that not only were the individual Psalms given by inspiration of God, but the collection of them into a separate volume was a work of Divine superintendence. You will find it a hard thing, with all your ingenuity, to set aside either the facts or the inference. I still assert that the inspired Book of Psalms having been compiled so far on in the old economy, furnishes strong presumptive evidence that it was intended not merely for the coming centuries of the Jewish era but for all time.

Although it is a matter of no consequence, whatever, to my argument, I am not disposed to withdraw my assertion that David was the writer of the 119th Psalm. “David must undoubtedly have been the writer,” says the celebrated commentator Bishop Horne. See also Henry and others, whose testimonies I shall be happy to furnish when desired.

In relation to some of the imprecatory psalms which you characterise as contrary to the Christian spirit and unfit to be sung in Christian times, I desire to make a few remarks. (1). If they are of such character as you represent them to be, then they are utterly unfit to be read. Why then do you not agitate the question of their total expulsion from the authorised version of the Scriptures? To introduce to our schools and our families—to teach our children to read what is in plain and palpable antagonism to the Christian spirit, is certainly as great a violation of the Christian sentiment as anything that can be imputed to the Psalms. And, then, why do you not agitate to have other portions of

the Old Testament Scriptures expunged also? I can call your attention to large portions of Isaiah and Jeremiah just as imprecatory as the most dreadful utterances of any one of the Psalms. Why, then, do you so earnestly stand up for the Bible in our schools? Why do you stand on the platform of the Bible Society, and advocate the circulation among the nations of that Book which is in such opposition to the Christian sentiment? (2). If the imprecatory Psalms are contrary to the Christian sentiment, then some portions of the New Testament Scriptures are equally so. In my former letter I called your attention to a specimen of them. I now invite your attention to others. In the Book of Revelation the Great God is represented as making a "great supper" for "the fowls of Heaven" that they may "eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, etc." Worse still; the souls under the altar are represented as crying, "How long, O Lord, holy and just and true, dost thou not avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Even the blessed Saviour himself could say hard things. Can any thing in David's utterances exceed those words of "the faithful and true Witness,"—"And I will kill her children with death." (Rev. II.: 23). Now, I will not undertake at present to explain the meaning of such passages. My design in introducing them does not require it. I introduce them simply to show that the Psalms of David are not more imprecatory than the Christian Scriptures. Why then do you reprobate in David what you tolerate in Paul, in the redeemed in glory, in the Redeemer himself? Reconcile the imprecations of the New Testament with the Christian spirit, and I will promise to reconcile all the Psalmist's utterances with the true Gospel sentiment, so that even the editor of the *Telegraph* will sing them *ex animo, con amore*. (3). If the imprecatory Psalms are opposed to the spirit of the Gospel, then, morality was a different thing in Jewish times from what it is now. You admit that those Psalms suited the church and were sung by Divine authority, in those days. Has the moral law, then, been changed, making that morally right *then* which is morally wrong *now*. Has the Holy Spirit changed His nature, exciting to one course then and to a different course now? Perish the thought. The moral law is the same unchangeable law throughout all time. What was morally right in the days of old, is right still. What was morally wrong, is wrong still. A celebrated writer says "Morality is the same now that ever it was; and I cannot think that the Holy Spirit has made that language divine in the Old Testament which is uncharitable in the New." We have "no new commandment but what was delivered to us from the beginning." I trust, Mr. Editor, that you and all who are like-minded will reconsider the matter, and abandon a position so dishonoring to that dispensation under which the Psalms were first given, and which no more tolerated malignity than the gospel dispensation—a position that is so dishonoring to that Holy Spirit by whom they were indited, and who has assumed the responsibility of the Psalmist's most offensive utterances.

In the course of your editorial remarks, you very condescendingly make the proposal that if I will manfully set myself to prove that the Bible Psalms were intended to be exclusively used in Christian praise, you will willingly sit at my feet. I beg to remind you that I do not

profess to be lord of any man's conscience—not even my own. I do not ask any one to sit at my feet, but at the feet of Him who has exclusively the right to speak with authority on any question of faith or practice. That I have not manifested great lack of *manliness* during the previous discussions of the question of Psalmody, will be admitted, I think, even by my oponents. I have not skulked behind a *nom de plume* but have always written over my own proper signature. Whether or not there has been any lack of solid, Scriptural *argument* in my communications I am willing to leave to your intelligent unprejudiced readers to determine. If, after all I have written, your verdict still is "Not proven, Mr. Lawson," I can only deal with you as Luther did with the Pope, and make my appeal from the editor of the *St. John Telegraph*, to the same editor, when better informed.

J. R. LAWSON.

The *Daily Telegraph* Jany. 17, 1880.

We publish to-day another letter from the Rev. J. R. Lawson on Psalmody. He holds hard by a grievance, and thinks our reply to his complaint in former letters about quotations from various authors unsatisfactory. We think they were appropriate, but as the matter is of no importance that we can see to the controversy, to Mr. Lawson or to us, we shall say nothing further about it at present.

Mr. Lawson says that since we admit that God should always have the best, we should sing the Psalms exclusively. We have to say in reply, good as they are, some of them are not the best for us to use exclusively in our worship. The inspired prayers of the Bible, many of which are contained in the Psalms, are, no doubt, much superior to some that are used, but still we do not find that Mr. Lawson confines himself to the former. The same may be said as regards sermons and addresses, but Mr. Lawson does not insist on using them alone. As to the quotation from Romaine (who is no better authority than Mr. Lawson himself), "I want a name for that man who should pretend to make better hymns than the Holy Ghost," we say that we never knew that the Holy Ghost made any hymns. That he inspired the writers of the Psalms, and that he still inspires holy men gifted with the poetic charisma, we believe. The mechanical view of inspiration implied in the quotation cannot be sustained.

In regard to Mr. Lawson's inference from our admissions relative to the collection of the Psalms, we have to recall Mr. Lawson's original statement and note the point of our objection. He says in his first letter, "By divine direction they were collected into a volume and labelled The Book of Psalms." We thought from the *ex cathedra* style in which Mr. Lawson spoke that he had some sources of information unknown to us, but we found that all the proof he had for the proposition that the divine Spirit had concerned himself about such mechanical things as collecting and labelling a book, or, as Mr. Lawson phrases it in his present letter, "the collection of them into a separate volume," was that they were afterwards quoted by Christ and His apostles. To this we

demurred. But this is nothing as an inference to what succeeds. He says: "I still assert that the inspired book of Psalms, having been compiled so far on in the old economy, furnishes strong presumptive evidence that it was intended not merely for the coming centuries of the Jewish era, but for all time." In Mr. Lawson's letter of Nov. 6th, his language was much stronger: "By divine direction they were collected and labelled the Book of Psalms at the time when the Jewish economy was near its close, DEMONSTRATING that they were not intended solely," etc. Then it was *demonstrating*, now it is strong *presumptive* proof. There is a difference here, and probably in a few weeks more it will, in Mr. Lawson's estimation, as in ours, be no proof at all. Men may think differently of the character of the evidence offered as proof; it is certain it cannot bind the conscience of Christendom nor hush the sacred songs of millions of Christians who at times sing other hymns of praise than are comprised in David's Psalms.

In a former article we showed the use and advantage of the Psalms so collected to the Jewish church for several centuries. Collections of Psalms had been in use long previously, doing service even from the reign of David, new volumes being added in succession. At the time of Ezra they were united in one, but still retaining their separate identity; so, at least, the best critics affirm. They had time for use, but to us they are useful still. We prize and use them, not for any such exclusive reason as that assigned by Mr. Lawson, and use some of them "for their own imperishable worth," that is, as matter of praise.

It was because Mr. Lawson spoke so confidently of the authorship of the 119th Psalm that we alluded to the matter. That some pious commentators of little critical skill assign to David the authorship, we know, but the evidence is overwhelmingly against the correctness of that claim.

Much graver and more important questions remain to be answered.

We come to the imprecatory passages. We wished to know in what way Mr. Lawson adapted his audience to some of the passages, but he will not tell us, nor how he would like to be the honored instrument of rendering to mystical Babylon double in the shape of thumb-screws, etc. If he had done that, he would probably have furnished a clue to an appropriate use of imprecatory passages.

Instead of this he has quoted a large number of similar spirit, several from the New Testament, and it is worthy of remark that they are all from the Book of Revelations—a book of mystical import, more especially in its prophetic portions, which will be better understood than they are now when the prophecies shall have been fulfilled.

Mr. Lawson thinks that because we do not wish to sing some of the Psalms, on account of their apparently vengeful spirit, we should cut them and all passages of a similar character out of the Bible. But may they not have other uses besides becoming the matter of Christian song? They have a use as history. They show us the character of the age to which they were appropriate, how much they were behind us, and how much we have to be thankful for, that we could not now contemplate without horror such acts as dashing the heads of the little Babylonians against the stones. We have touched here upon a matter which requires some consideration. Mr. Lawson says: "If the imprecatory Psalms

are opposed to the spirit of the Gospel then morality was a different thing in Jewish times to what it is now * * * * Has morality then changed, etc? "Has the Holy Spirit changed his nature? Perish the thought!" We beg, in this connexion, to call to Mr. Lawson's recollection what Jesus said about Moses, the inspired, and the permission of divorce, for the hardness of the Jewish heart—a reason which would not be accepted in a divorce court at least in British realms; further what Jesus said in his sermon on the Mount, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you that ye resist not evil, etc." This saying is from Leviticus. "Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth," as recorded on the sacred page, yet set aside for a precept of a more patient and gentle tone. Indeed, much of the Sermon on the Mount was spoken with the purpose of elevating mankind to a higher level of morality than they had been able previously to maintain or than had been required by the Mosaic law. It is in this sense that we speak of the Judaistic spirit being different from the Christian spirit, of being inferior to it, and in a way opposed to it; and however it is to be explained, the Hebrew Scriptures sanctioned that lower form in some of its enactments. For instance, they sanctioned slavery [see, among other passages, Lev. 25, 44], a system which we say was extinguished by the spirit of Christianity; they permitted and regulated bigamy [see Deut. 21, 15 to 18], which we punish by imprisonment. Several of the inspired men, including David, were polygamists and concubinists, yet we are told that their morality was the same as that of Christianity. No doubt there is an absolute morality which cannot change. It is that of Christ, to which humanity was being educated. But man in the earlier times was barbarous, and incapable for many ages, on account of the hardness of his heart, of receiving the highest and purest conceptions of morality. When we consider the state of morals in Greece in the time of the Trojan war, we wonder that the Hebrew lawgiver was able to establish such a comparatively pure code, and yet we cannot shut our eyes to the inferiority of some of its details to the absolute morality of the decalogue and of that demanded by Jesus. It was the best possible at the time and yet far from the best to which humanity was being educated, and into the possession of which we have come.

It will then be apparent why we do not cut and carve the Scriptures as Mr. Lawson suggests, and why we yet are unwilling to sing certain passages which are redolent of the inferior spirit, as the exclusive matter of our praise to God. The ancient spirit was cruel, the modern is mild; conquerors then could flay men alive without compunction, and enjoy the agonies of the extremest torture. We, while punishing criminals with death, demand that it be done with the minimum of pain. To put women to the sword, destroying mother and offspring, and to dash the heads of infants against stones, to render double torture for all the pains they had suffered and such like things, were considered pleasant exercises of the victors over the vanquished, but a cry of execration would go up from all the civilized modern world against any who would be guilty of such cruelties. And to sing with exultation of such things now without altering the meaning in some way is—well, not to the taste of the majority of Christians.

Mr. Lawson need hardly have stepped out of his way to defend his manliness, which we had no intention of impeaching; and we hardly think he would have done so, except to appropriate some glory which he supposes attaches to the writing of his name beneath his letters, and to take a fling at our editorial impersonality, which he, with small regard for correctness but with an epithet which approaches the scurrilous, calls a *nom de plume*. We beg to assure Mr. Lawson that his argument is neither the better nor the worse to us for the appendage of his name, nor ought ours to be of more or less value to him, because it is in conformity with journalistic custom.

Neither was it necessary to remind us that he did not profess to be lord of any man's conscience. We never thought that because we were willing to learn from Mr. Lawson, we were exalting him to the chair of infallibility. How could it enter into Mr. Lawson's mind that because we proposed to take the attitude of the attentive scholar, we were going to endow him with the lordship of our conscience? We must say, however, that we have been so much disappointed in Mr. Lawson, as a teacher, that we find it necessary to weigh very carefully what he propounds. We, however, see very little prospect of his views being adopted and yet we hope the world is daily becoming better.

James Pennick

SIR:—At the outset of my remarks, I would desire to remove a misapprehension which seems to have taken possession of your mind. You seem to think that my allusion to a *nom de plume* was meant for yourself. Such was not the case. I certainly would not speak of an editor, either chief or subordinate, skulking behind a *nom de plume* for maintaining his editorial impersonality in the exercise of his office.

I think that on a reconsideration of the second paragraph of your review, you will see that any reference to Mr. Lawson's inconsistency in not confining himself to Bible prayers and Bible sermons, as well as Bible psalms, is not to the point. If prayers and discourses were to be set to music and sung, there might appear a shade of inconsistency; but prayer and preaching are very different ordinances from singing praise to God. Moreover, if there were a book of prayers in the Bible, and no authority for using any others than those contained in it, Mr. Lawson would certainly confine himself to that book, in the exercise of prayer. If there were a book of sermons in the Bible, given by inspiration, to be used by ministers in their pulpit addresses, and no authority for the use of anything else, Mr. L. would certainly confine himself to that book, very much to his own ease and the increased edification of his hearers. But it so happens that in the Bible there is neither a book of prayers nor of sermons, so that he must just make his own prayers and addresses as best he can, under the direction of the Word and Spirit of Christ. There is, however, a book of psalms in the Bible, given by inspiration of God, and, therefore, infallibly correct, and as there is not a particle of authority for the use of any other, Mr. L. must just use it until a higher authority than that of man orders him to lay it aside.

You call my attention to the fact, that in relation to a certain point, I now call that *presumptive evidence*, which I formerly characterised as *demonstrative*. You say: "There is a difference here, and probably in a few weeks more, it will be, in Mr. Lawson's estimate, as in ours, no proof at all." Now in your editorial which I am now reviewing, you put it into my power to return the compliment with some little interest. In former comments some of the psalms were characterized by you as unfit to be sung at all; now they are only unfit to be sung *exclusively*. You say: "Some of them are not the best for us to use *exclusively* in worship." Formerly you would not sing some of the psalms because of their "irritated and maddened" spirit; now you do not wish to sing them because of their *apparently* vengeful spirit. (The italics are mine). Thus you are evidently coming round to the right position, and it is to be hoped that in a short time even the *appearance* of a vengeful spirit will be eliminated, and you will sing them as devoutly and cordially as the most ardent admirers of the psalms could desire.

As you seem to be somewhat dissatisfied that all my imprecatory quotations should be from the Book of Revelations, I will furnish you with some from other portions of the New Testament. The apostle Paul was not far behind David in his imprecations. "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his work." "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." "Thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness;" was his vehement address to Elymas the sorcerer. Even the tender hearted apostle John could speak hard things: "If any man come and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house nor bid him God speed." Even the Redeemer himself could speak roughly. He could be so uncharitable as to call Herod a fox. He could denounce woes against the Scribes and Pharisees as "blind guides, fools, hypocrites," whose proselytes were no better than "the children of hell," and who could "not escape damnation." My object in introducing these and previous quotations, is to show that the Jewish writings are no more imprecatory than the Christian—that the Psalms are no more "apparently vengeful" than the apostolic epistles, and that the condemnation of the spirit and language of some of the Psalms, involves a condemnation of the spirit and language of large portions of the New Testament Scriptures. If your pity for the dear little Babylonian innocents, and your horror at the thought of "putting women to the sword, destroying mother and offspring, and dashing the heads of infants against stones, to render double torture for all the pains they had suffered, and such like things," rouse all the indignation of your soul against the Psalmist for recording and justifying such bloody deeds, why do you not raise "the cry of execration" against Paul and others, and even the Redeemer himself, for language just as "apparently vengeful" and apparently inconsistent with that love that is the fulfilling of the law?

It is a fearful error into which you have fallen, Mr. Editor, in regard to the distinction between the Jewish and Christian dispensations. I trust that you will reconsider your utterances, and either withdraw or materially modify them. You say: "It is in this sense that we speak of the Judaistic spirit being different from the Christian spirit, of being

inferior to it, and in a way opposed to it; and however it is to be explained, the Hebrew scriptures sanctioned that lower form in some of its enactments." I suppose that the plain English of that and other statements to the same effect is, that a spirit that it was morally right to cultivate and exemplify in Jewish days is morally wrong now—that there were certain actions morally right then which are morally wrong now—that there was an inferior morality good enough *for those days*, but that a higher morality is required *now*, that which you call the morality of *Christ* as distinguished from that of *Moses*. Now, such a theory is utterly inconsistent with the very nature of morality. It is in keeping with the system of the "Man of Sin" who thinks to "change times and laws." Morality is as unchangeable as the Moral Law is. The Moral Law is a transcript of the moral nature of its author who is without variableness or shadow of turning. What was moral therefore in Jewish times, is moral still. Christ came not to change the Moral Law in any respect, either to make it broader or narrower. To talk of the morality of Christ in Christian morality, or contrast to that of Moses or Jewish morality is a grievous error in Theology. On the two commandments of love to God and man, hang all the law, and the Prophets.

That the Old Testament dispensation sanctioned personal revenge is wholly untrue. On this point, Mr. Editor, you have fallen into the error of the Scribes and Pharisees, who, seeing on the statute book of Israel's commonwealth certain enactments for the punishment of crime, interpreted them as sanctioning private revenge. They were just like one who should go into a court of law, and seeing the judge sentence a thief to the penitentiary or a murderer to the scaffold, and should then go immediately and burn his neighbor's house, or stab him in the dark, under the delusion that the laws of the land justify personal revenge. Now the Saviour's language in His sermon on the Mount, to which you allude, was intended to remove these false glosses of the Scribes and Pharisees. It was intended to distinguish between the magistrate on the bench and the private member of society. "Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth" has reference to the procedure in a judicial court, where no personal feelings should be allowed to interfere with the course of justice, but where punishment should always be in proportion to the crime. To quote, then, the old judicial law of "eye for eye and tooth for tooth," as sanctioning revenge, and to contrast it with the Christian law of love to enemies, is to manifest woeful unacquaintance with the distinction between the judicial and the moral law; between the magistrate on the bench and the private citizen. The law of Moses no more sanctioned personal revenge than the Saviour's sermon on the Mount. The Hebrew Scriptures no more allowed "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" in the private relations of life, than the Christian Scriptures. The Book of Proverbs is just as emphatic as Paul's epistle in the requirement: "If thine enemy hunger feed him," etc. Love is the fulfilling of the law; but was it not always so? We have no "new commandment" other than that which "was from the beginning."

The Book of Psalms has no more personal revenge on it than the Sermon on the Mount. David never wished a curse to fall upon any

persons because they were his personal enemies. He who would not retaliate on his persecutor, Saul, though he had the most favorable opportunity to do so, and though, by so doing, he could have freed himself from further persecution—who could say in relation to Shimei's curses—"Let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him," probably manifested a milder and meeker spirit than many would display, in similar circumstances, who now refuse to sing some of David's odes, because there is so much spite in them. His imprecatory psalms are just the righteous denunciations of a holy and just God, against those who should set themselves in malignant opposition to His people and cause in the world. There is not a particle of private revenge at the bottom of one of them. He who cannot sing them in their true spirit and meaning has yet to learn the true import of those petitions in the Lord's Prayer—"Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done." If any persons demur to their use in praise, it is either because they do not understand their true meaning, or because they lack the essential element in all devotional exercises—a heart right with God.

J. R. LAWSON.

Another letter on Psalmody from the Rev. J. R. Lawson will be found in our present issue. Passing over the enigma regarding the *nom de plume* which we leave in the mystery with which he has invested it, we come to the reassertion of the essential difference between the psalm and the prayer. He has not, however, in his reaffirmation of this difference, grounded it on the same reason which he assigned in his pamphlet, which was that in prayer we make known our wants, which are ever varying, and so, of necessity, our petitions must vary also; while as the great object of praise is continually the same, the praises that are suitable at one time are suitable at another. We showed that the Psalms contained prayers, while our prayers contain ascriptions of praise—that, in fact, they were to a large extent identical. Mr. Lawson did not condescend to notice this point, though it is fatal to his argument. We may further note that, at the conclusion of the 72nd Psalm, the compilers call the Psalms of David by the very name of prayers: "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended." They were in error, indeed, for after them other Psalms of David were found and added to the collection; but the name "prayers" given by the collectors shows in what light they viewed the Psalms—namely, as vehicles of prayer as much as of praise. But Mr. Lawson says: "If prayers and discourses were to be set to music and sung, there might appear a shade of inconsistency," etc. Is it then the music and rhythm that are inspired? Is it the adaptation to the harp or the orchestra that gives sacredness to the psalm or prayer? This is an extraordinary position; it is not in the matter of the Psalms that Mr. Lawson finds the reason for their exclusive use, but in the uninspired mechanical arrangements by which they are set to music, and so made capable of being sung. Mr. Lawson says there is no authorized book of prayers in the Bible. We say there are both in the Bible, and there is just as much authority for using them exclusively as for the exclusive use of the Psalms as praise.

Mr. Lawson defends his lowering of his estimate of the proof contained in his so-called argument, that the late period of the collecting and labelling of the Psalms should satisfy us that they were to be used in the Christian Church, by affirming that we also have toned down our objections to the use of some of the Psalms, by our statement that some of them are not the best for us to use exclusively in worship. The sentence was first written, They are not the best to be used exclusively, etc., which was altered to some of them, etc., the word "exclusively" being deleted, but not sufficiently for the printer or proof-reader. But to come back to the proof which with Mr. L. was first demonstrative and afterwards probable, we have to say it is no proof at all—does not contain the slightest shadow of proof, and must, as we have shown by reason sufficient, be altogether eliminated from the controversy. It is *hors de combat*. Mr. Lawson, in his desire to prove that the spirit of the New Testament is the same as the Old, quotes some passages, outside of the Revelations. He says: Paul was not far behind David in his imprecations, We think differently. We doubt not that Alexander was a very wicked man who deserved to be relegated to the judgment day. As to the real force of Anathema Maranatha, it seems to good interpreters to mean separated till the coming of the Lord—cut off from the church. There is nothing in the passages descriptive of the character of Elymas, we hold, which any one might not apply to a determined villain. As to Christ calling Herod a fox, and pronouncing woes on the Pharisees we must say that Mr. Lawson was hard run for some parallel when he quoted them as approaching to the spirit of some parts of the psalms. These being comminations against hypocrites and apostates we can assent to both. It does not offend our moral sense to find Herod called a fox, but that sense is offended when we are asked to exult over the dashing of the heads of Babylonish children against the stones, or to approve of the destruction of mother and child by one fell swoop.

Mr. Lawson is notably prudent in passing over facts which he dare not encounter, and in fixing on some apparently vulnerable point. He has given us no exposition of what Christ meant by saying that Moses for the hardness of the Jewish heart permitted divorce; nor of the slavery which the Jew practised by Mosaic authority; nor of the practice of bigamy; nor of the permission of concubinage; but passed all over with some very patent general truths regarding the essential nature of morality in all times and circumstances. We hope Mr. Lawson is preparing to enlighten us on these points, for though, owing to the pressure on our space, the controversy is rather intermittent, we would not willingly deprive our readers of so much valuable information. Mr. Lawson holds up his hands in horror at the fearful error of making a distinction between Jewish and Christian morality, and our woeful unacquaintance with the distinction between the judicial and the moral law. We very much fear that he would have thought Christ very much in error when he urged his followers to try to transcend the spirit and tone of certain Mosaic precepts, which, to our mind he most evidently did. This, Mr. Lawson, is not an error but a truth, and a glorious truth; a truth not changed by our affirmation that the absolute morality is embodied in Thou shalt love the Lord, etc., etc., and thy neighbor as

thyself; a truth whose proof refuses to vanish from the pages of the Mosaic code, which, in this particular case, we defy Mr. Lawson's ingenuity to reconcile with our ideas of Christian morality.

We are unwilling to broaden the bounds of this controversy or we should enter more fully into the whole question of the authority of the judicial law in the present day, and show how far it comes short of the spirit, but we relegate that matter to some other occasion.

But to revert to the matter. Mr. Lawson thinks us guilty of mistaking the judicial for the moral law, as did the Pharisees. We say we do not believe that the Pharisees fell into any such error, as assuredly neither did we. The spirit which Jesus wishes to change in his remarks on the *lex talionis* is not that of private revenge—which was not what the Pharisees taught was allowable—but it was that spirit of extreme retaliation which led them to pursue every offence to the utmost metes and bounds of justice,—as is apparent when he adds, "If any man sue thee at the law and take away thy coat let him have thy cloak also." The Jewish law encouraged men to go to the extremes of justice, but Christ's principle is "That ye resist not the evil." To our mind there is an evident design by Christ to modify the extreme form of the *lex talionis*, and certainly to make the whole attitude of the Christian spirit in regard to the pursuit of legal avengements an advance on the Jewish spirit.

The Pharisees may, with the law regarding the avenger of blood in their eye, have taught that, by parity of reasoning, a man who had lost an eye or a tooth might take summary vengeance by retaliation in kind. But considering how much danger there was to the avenger in seeking redress for himself, and how safe it was for him to let the tribunal avenge him, it is not at all likely that they would recommend the private and dangerous mode when another so much more sure was at their election. Mr. Lawson misses the mark when he says that the gloss they put upon the law was the propriety of private revenge. What Jesus taught was that his followers should act as though there was no law—that they should not seek revenge through its instrumentality, but rather suffer wrong than retaliate either in a private or judicial way. Certainly this law, too, though judicial, encouraged a moral disposition among those living under its authority which Christ discouraged, and indeed, this law has, among Christian people, been largely set aside—for, though striking, and wounding are still punishable offences, yet they are not punished in the extreme form authorized by the Jewish *lex talionis*. If any one is so unfortunate, as either in the heat of passion, or by accident to strike out a tooth or an eye, our laws would not take vengeance in kind, but by some fine or imprisonment according to the nature of the offence, would vindicate justice. This difference we credit to the milder spirit of Christianity infused into modern statute books. Both the law and the vengeful spirit nurtured by the law have the disapprobation of the Master.

Probably Mr. Lawson may insist that the judicial law, which is moral as far as the magistrate is concerned, is still binding. If so, then we should seek out and put the witch to death, stone the Sabbath-breaker, the wicked and disobedient son, the adulterer and the adulteress, the

enticer to idolatry, &c. Perhaps, though the priest was the judge in the case of jealousy, the same course should be pursued now in finding out whether the spirit of jealousy which seizes some men has any just ground, as was authorized by Moses. But we cannot agree to this importation of the Jewish judicial law into our institutes. We hold that we have sufficient authority from Christ to set aside these enactments, as we are authorized to set aside the laws regarding slavery, bigamy, &c., and to conclude that certain statutes, not in full accord with the higher requirements of the supreme moral law, but which were necessary and useful for the time and people are no longer of force in the Christian dispensation.

If Mr. Lawson takes the position that the judicial law is no longer of force, then he can have no hesitation in allowing that Jews set aside the *lex talionis* in the case in question.

Mr. Lawson thinks David was a wonderfully mild man, because he did not slay Saul, nor Joab, nor Shimei, when he had them in his power. The reason he did not kill Saul was because he feared to put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed; why he spared Joab was because he dare not put him to death when he desired it, and why he spared Shimei was because he thought it politic to do so. But he kept the revenge on these two till he was beyond the reach of its recoil, and relegated to his son the execution of a sentence which he did not find it expedient to carry out himself. But supposing David to have been ever so mild and merciful, still Mr. Lawson's conclusion that if any persons demur to the use of any of his psalms, it is "either because they do not understand their true meaning or because they lack the essential element in all devotional exercises—a heart right with God," seems rather too much in the *ex-cathedra* style, especially as Mr. Lawson has so far failed to *show that we are under any obligation whatever to sing them*. The argument that an opponent is either stupid or bad goes, we are aware, a great way with some people and will cover a multitude of sins. We forbear to follow up that line of argument, but we would recall Mr. Lawson's attention to what he has got to prove before he can suppose we will accept his gratuitous conclusions.

1. That the psalms were exclusively appointed to be sung in the Christian Church.

2. That they are more in harmony with Christian sentiment than New Testament and other hymns, especially Christian, which celebrate the name of Jesus, and portray his completed work instead of indicating only typically and prophetically what that work was to be.

3. That there is an essential difference between psalms and prayers.

4. That there is no danger arising from the use of commination psalms lest the personal animus embodied in the letter should be considered the legitimate spirit, and be sung as such.

Mr. Lawson has not yet established one of these positions. Indeed by his recent style of argument he seems to us to have given up all hope of establishing them, more especially the first, without which proof he cannot make any progress whatever, nor offer the shadow of a reason why the great hymn-singing Christian world should break their harps and hush all their *Te Deums* that are not couched in the words of David's Psalms.

James P. Smith

SIR:—Before entering upon a review of your recent comments, I would desire to correct a misrepresentation—I do not say wilful—that appeared in your brief notice of my letter, before it appeared in print. You speak of Mr. Lawson's "attempt to inculcate the idea that nothing should ever be sung but the Psalms of David." I do not hold or teach any such doctrine as that scriptural, uninspired hymns should never be sung. Many of them I delight in. I love to *read* them and also to *sing* them. It is only when they are introduced into the church, to supplement or supplant the inspired Psalms, that I raise my voice against their use. "Bunyan's Pilgrims Progress" is very excellent reading, but yet I should be very much opposed to the introduction of that book into the pulpit, to be read as a substitute for the Holy Scriptures. And many uninspired hymns are very excellent, but that is no reason why they should be brought into the sanctuary, to take that place in the devotions of God's people, that by Divine appointment, exclusively belongs to the Songs of Zion.

A desire to narrow the field of discussion, and not a consciousness of weakness, was my sole reason for leaving unnoticed, in my last letter, the questions of slavery, divorce, polygamy, etc., which have no direct bearing on the subject of psalmody. It is very evident that if such be the pressure on your columns that the question can only come up once a month or so, it will not do to wander over the wild field of the judicial law, and discuss all the points connected with it lest the controversy should "drag its slow length along" till a distant futurity. I will, therefore, leave all these questions for the present, with the general remark that the Hebrew Scriptures never sanctioned slavery, bigamy, divorce, etc. They were always immoral. For wise purposes, Moses, the law-giver of Israel, was not directed to issue a prohibitory law against them, but to subject them to a wholesome legislation. Legislation on an existing evil does not involve an approval of it. These things can come up in a separate discussion when the question of Psalmody shall be settled.

It is, furthermore, utterly untrue to say that the Hebrew Scriptures sanctioned a spirit of revenge. If the ethics of the New Testament are expounded in the Sermon on the mount, the ethics of the Old Testament are expounded in the "Book of Proverbs." Where is the "lex talionis" in the one more than in the other? When Paul would dissuade Christians from cherishing a malignant spirit, he quotes from the Book of Proverbs—"If thine enemy hunger, feed him," &c. The "lex talionis" which the Saviour repealed, was no where but in the perverted judgments of the Jewish false teachers, who misinterpreted the righteous judicial law of "an eye for an eye," &c., as warranting private revenge. The Jewish magistrate was no more allowed to transcend the bounds of righteousness, or to oppress any one, in his judicial decisions, than the Christian civil ruler. The private Jew was no more allowed to take the law in his own hands, or go to law in order to gratify spite, than the private Christian. The Saviour in His sermon on the mount, certainly condemns private revenge, but not more strongly than Moses in the judicial law—than Solomon in the "Book of Proverbs" or than David in the "Book of Psalms." If one was to find his enemy's ox or his ass going astray, he was to restore it to the owner. Was there any revenge

in that? "Thou shalt not avenge or bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Was there any "lex talionis" in that, to be repealed? Consult David's utterances in the seventh and thirty-fifth Psalms, for an exhibition of his spirit, in relation to his bitter personal foes—"Yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy." "False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not." They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul. But as for me when they were sick, my clothing was of sackcloth, I humbled myself with fasting. * * * I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother," &c. Would it not be a happy thing, if such a spirit was more fully exemplified in Christian times, and by many who now reprobate David because of his "cursing Psalms."

I am glad to find that you can see nothing inconsistent with the Christian spirit, in the New Testament imprecations—at least those outside the Book of Revelation. Alexander the coppersmith, you say, was "a very wicked man, who deserved to be relegated to the judgment day." But was not Doeg the Edomite, in David's day, just as bad as he? Why, then, do you condemn David for the very thing in which you justify Paul? You approve of Paul calling Elymas a "child of the devil, an enemy of all righteousness." But were not the Ziphites, in David's time, just as worthy of reprobation as he? Why then is your "moral sense" so much offended when you find David so angry with the enemies of God? You justify Paul in his "Anathema Maranatha," the strongest imprecation, perhaps, in the Divine word. You very wisely do not say that you endorse the interpretation of those who see nothing in it but "separated till the coming of the Lord—cut off from the church." The critics of whom you speak belong, no doubt, to that theological school that sets itself to tone down all the utterances of Holy Writ that are directly antagonistic to Universalism. If all who love not the Lord Jesus Christ are only to be cut off from the Church till the coming of the Lord, then it follows, that at His coming, they will be restored again. Good news certainly for "hypocrites and apostates." The phrase Anathema Maranatha will admit of no such interpretation. However critics of a certain school may labour to take the fiery edge off such a dreadful utterance, they can never make anything of it less than "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" when He shall come to take vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel. Did David ever use stronger language than that in his worst imprecations? Why, the dashing of the heads of little Babylonians against the stones, and even their mothers with them by "one fell swoop"—though the mothers in the picture of carnage are only the creation of your own fertile imagination—was nothing, in comparison with the consignment of millions to everlasting perdition. The dashing of the little Babylonian innocents against the stones was just a speedy, though a rough way to make them happy, according to the theory of universal infant salvation, whilst the apostolic Anathema Maranatha was sure to shut up countless millions of adults in misery for ever. How does it come to pass then, that whilst your "moral sense" does not recoil at the utterances of Paul, it is so much offended with the spirit and utterances of the Psalmist, as so con-

trary to "our ideas of Christian morality." However acute you may be in detecting distinctions when these may appear to suit your theory, you will never be able to show to the satisfaction of your intelligent and unprejudiced readers, that there is any essential difference between the spirit of Paul's Epistles and that of David's Psalms. You will require to produce far stronger arguments to prove that the imprecatory Psalms are hostile to the Christian spirit, before that you can wring from your unprejudiced readers any other than the Scotch verdict—Not proven, Mr. Editor.

At the close of your comments, you come more closely to the question at issue. You narrow the field of discussion to four points. You might very properly have reduced it still farther, by leaving out three of the four points, for it is very evident, that if the first position be established, viz., that the Psalms were exclusively appointed to be sung in the Christian Church, then, all other questions may be excluded from the controversy. The Divine appointment must be held to be a sufficient settlement of the question, whatever difficulties may appear, and whatever objections may be raised.

The *first* point that you require me to establish is—"that the Psalms were exclusively appointed to be sung in the Christian Church." In regard to that proposition, I refer you to my little pamphlet on the "Songs of Zion." I have, in that tractate, shown that there is no need for any other poetical compositions in the service of praise than the Psalms. I have shown that they were composed by Divine inspiration for the very purpose of being used in praise—that, as far as the evidence goes, they were exclusively used during all periods of the old Dispensation that succeeded the time of David—that they were compiled into a separate book, called the "Book of Psalms," under the superintendence of the Divine Spirit, when the Jewish era was near its close, and therefore could not have been solely intended for the outgoing but also for the incoming Dispensation. I have shown that when the Redeemer came to set up the new Dispensation, He did not abrogate the Psalmody that had been previously in use—He gave no intimation, either by precept or example, that there would be any change in the law of Psalmody. He gave no directions to His apostles to prepare a new Psalm Book, nor did He intimate that any would be needed. When He and His disciples sang, it was in the words of the Psalms. When the apostles and early Christians sang, it was exclusively in the words of the Psalms, as far as the evidence goes—and not a single uninspired hymn, used in the church in the service of praise, can be traced farther back than the close of the second century. These are just a small sample of the reasons why I hold and teach that the Bible Psalms were appointed to be exclusively sung in the Christian Church. I would now respectfully ask you to produce your *Scripture warrant*—your *Divine authority*, for the use of any other hymns, in the praises of the sanctuary, than those contained in that book, given by inspiration of God, and "fitted to express the religion of all saints in all ages." If you fail to establish a *Divine authority*, for the use of uninspired hymns in praise, all your reasonings must be labelled—Tekel.

The *second* position that you require me to establish is "that they are

more in harmony with Christian sentiment than New Testament and other hymns, especially Christian, which celebrate the name of Jesus and portray His completed work, instead of indicating only typically and prophetically what that work was to be." In regard to that proposition which you put into my hands, I offer the following remarks: (1) I know of no "New Testament hymns" other than those contained in the Book of Psalms. If you can find any such in the New Testament, intended to be sung in the devotional services of the church, please point them out. (2) If the Psalms do not celebrate the *name* Jesus, they celebrate all that the name expresses. They celebrate Him in His Divinity as the Son of God—in His offices as Prophet, Priest and King—in His sufferings, resurrection, glorious ascension, and universal mediatorial dominion. The Psalms are full of Christ. There is no Book of the Old Testament so frequently quoted by the Redeemer and His apostles, and in every quotation the reference is to Him who saves His people from their sins. Is it not a puerile thing, then, to condemn the Psalms because they do not contain the *name* Jesus, whilst there is every thing to contemplate and admire which that name imports? What percentage of the hymns in common use celebrate the *name* Jesus? I have now before me the *Scottish Hymnal*, published by authority of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. I find 200 hymns in that collection. How many of these contain the *name* Jesus? Just 46 according to my numeration. That is to say—out of 200 hymns, "especially Christian," there are 46 that make no mention of the *name* Jesus. Why do you not consign them to the *Index Expurgatorius* as unfit for a place in Christian hymnology? (3) It is not true, that the Psalms only indicate *typically* and *prophetically* what the Redeemer's work was to be. They celebrate a *completed* work. In regard to the great facts of human redemption the language of *history* is more frequently employed than that of *prophecy*. That is a feature of the Psalms that shows them to have been intended for Christian worship, and that eminently fits them for it. In using them we do not celebrate a Saviour *to come* as a sacrifice, but, generally, a Saviour as *having come, having suffered* and *having entered* into His glory. If the Psalms are unfit for Christian praise, because the minority of them celebrate a Redeemer *to come*, then they were far more unfit for praise in Jewish times, because the majority of them celebrate a Saviour as *having come* and completed the work which was given Him to do. Yet the ancient church, we are assured, did sing them, and by Divine appointment too.

The *third* proposition that I am called on to establish is, "That there is an essential difference between Psalms and Prayer." It is somewhat strange that you who are so acute in detecting distinctions favorable to your position, should be so dull of apprehension in regard to those of an opposite character. When it is a question of distinction between *reading* and *singing* you can, at a glance, see such a difference between the two exercises, that while you can *read* the imprecatory Psalms, you hold up both hands in horror at the thought of *singing* them. But when it is a question of difference between prayer and praise, you confess that you cannot see it. You see no essential difference between a composition offered as a prayer, and that same composition set to music, and sung in

praise to God. Now, if you can see no distinction in the latter case how is it that you can see it in the former? To use your own mode of reasoning—Is it the music and the rythm that infuse into the imprecatory Psalms all their bad spirit, so that whilst you can use them as very good *reading* you refuse them as Psalms to be sung?

There is no proposition that can be more easily established than that there is an essential difference between prayer and praise. They are entirely distinct ordinances in the Christian Church, as they were in the Jewish. The fact which no one disputes, that there are prayers in the Book of Psalms, does not make against the distinction between the two exercises. The prayers contained in that Book are Psalms. They are prayers intended to be *sung* as praises, and hence, whilst they may be properly used either as forms of prayer or as models, their specific character is that of prayers to be set to music, and sung in praise, and as such, they do not come within the range of that distinct ordinance which we call prayer. Whatever agreement there may be between prayer and praise, they are distinct exercises of religious worship. And in our worshipping assemblies is there not a full recognition of the distinction? After a psalm or hymn is sung in praise; the minister says—“Let us pray.” In praise, the worshippers do, or at least should, vocally join: in prayer, the minister is the mouth-piece of the congregation, and the people, generally, are silent. In the two ordinances, the attitude is different. In singing praise, the people usually stand up, whilst in prayer, many congregations lazily and irreverently sit down. And as the two ordinances are distinct in their form, so also in their immediate design. The primary design of prayer is to make known our wants to God; the immediate design of praise is to extol Him “for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men.” And as these ordinances are so distinct, so the Great Head of the Church has made provision in the one case, which He has not done in the other. He has furnished to His Church a Book of Psalms, but not a Book of Prayers. That Book of Psalms He has given to be the subject matter of the Church’s praise in all generations, and you will find it, Mr. Editor, to be about the hardest work you ever yet attempted, to establish a *Divine Warrant*, to set that Book aside, or supplement it, by hymns of human composition, in the praises of the sanctuary.

The *fourth* position that you require me to establish is—“That there is no danger arising from the use of commination psalms, lest the personal animus embodied in the letter, should be considered the legitimate spirit and be sung as such.” I shall just leave that proposition in your own hands, Mr. Editor. There is no law of sound reasoning that requires me to prove a negative. I will be very curious to hear your reasoning against the *use* of an ordinance derived from the danger of abusing it. Of course I expect to hear you argue that we should turn away from a preached Gospel, lest it should prove “the savour of death unto death”—that we should “forsake the assembling of ourselves together,” lest we should “come together unto condemnation”—and that we ought to keep away from the Lord’s Supper, lest we should eat and drink judgment to ourselves.

J. R. LAWSON:

The *Daily Telegraph*, Feb. 25, 1880.

We insert another letter from the Rev. Mr. Lawson in our present issue. He thinks we have misrepresented him in our short notice on receipt of his former letter. He is very sensitive about misrepresentation. Who but a very sensitive person would ever have thought that we intended to assume that Mr. Lawson could not, or would not sing anything but the Psalms of David? We have no doubt—never had—that Mr. Lawson could find delight in a good hymn.

When we spoke of Mr. Lawson inculcating the idea that nothing should be sung but the Psalms of David, we had reference to their use in worship—public worship—though we need not add the adjective, as in fact we think the same reasons that are for or against their exclusive use in public, hold equally with regard to private worship, nay, to individual worship, and if Mr. Lawson ever sings one of these hymns by himself in the way of worship, we think he has taken the first step in the road to the fair and legitimate use of the same in private and public worship against which he has, so far, strong objections though, as we think, weak arguments.

Mr. Lawson thinks that the introduction of some good hymns along with the psalms would find a parallel in taking away the pulpit Bible and replacing it with Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. There is no harm, surely, in having a good uninspired composition in the shape of a sermon, or a good book of any kind in the pulpit, along with the Bible, and in using it for instruction. Mr. Spurgeon's sermons, if we mistake not, are sometimes read, perhaps not from the pulpit, but from the platforms of good Reformed Presbyterian churches. And we would not object a whit to a few pages of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* if a sermon were not available, and if those to whom it was addressed found themselves edified by it.

Although the questions about divorce, slavery, polygamy, etc., have no direct bearing on the subject of Psalmody, they have a very important one on the question regarding the difference of spirit between the old and new Dispensations. Mr. Lawson now admits that Moses by Divine direction instituted wholesome legislation regarding these criminal practices—just the thing we have contended for. Assuredly, we never supposed that God taught that these evils were right things in themselves. All we affirmed was that certain courses of conduct were permitted, and legislated for which were utterly condemned by Christ, and among these we shall affirm was the *lex talionis*, in which the doctrine of revenge is found in broad and unmistakable form. That there are passages in the Old Testament where the Christian spirit and doctrine are anticipated we know. We held and hold that there is no higher morality than that embodied in the "sum of the ten commandments." But we hold that for the hardness of the Jewish heart, a lower legislation was adopted, as Mr. L. virtually admits. We also hold that all through the Old Testament there crop out anticipations of the milder and more beneficent spirit which Jesus would have all His followers to cultivate, just as we have anticipations of the gospel in Isaiah and Ezekiel and the Psalms, indicating, though dimly, what Christianity was to be when presented in the life of its Founder, and breathed into the Church by the Spirit who takes the things of Christ and shows them to the believer.

Mr. L. asserts that the *lex talionis* which Jesus repealed was no where but in the perverted judgments of Jewish false teachers, as warranting private revenge. In our former letter we assigned reasons, which Mr. Lawson does not try to answer, indicating clearly that it was not *private* revenge, but revenge by means of the civil court that Christ here set aside. Mr. L. says that the Saviour does not condemn private revenge more strongly than Moses in the judicial law; than Solomon in the Book of Proverbs; than David in the Book of Psalms. "If one was to find an ox or ass going astray he was to restore it to the owner." Was there any revenge in that asks Mr. L. We say no, but this has nothing to do with the *lex talionis*, and is, therefore, not to the point at issue. The next passage is equally aside from the question, as it does not appear that the neighbour had done any wrong to require the application to the magistrate to have the *lex talionis* put in form. As to David's statements of his extreme kindness to those who became his enemies, we have to say that the passage quoted by Mr. Lawson only shows how friendly David had been but not what his feelings were after he had been so badly treated. So that we do not see that there is any room for the homily with which Mr. Lawson treats those who do not altogether admire his comminations or his conduct either to Joab or Shimei, or to the unfortunate inhabitants of Rabbah whom he "put under saws, and under harrows, and made them pass through the brick kiln." It is rather out of place to say—"would it not be a happy thing if such a spirit were more fully exemplified in Christian times, &c."

Mr. Lawson thinks that the comminations of Paul are as bad as those of David. We think far otherwise, but as it would require much space to justify our position we pass by what, after all, is only distantly related to the main subject at issue, which is, were the Psalms exclusively appointed to be sung in the Christian church? In regard to this Mr. Lawson refers us to his little pamphlet on the "Songs of Zion," and then gives a synopsis of that tract. If he had at the same time condescended to notice and reply to the reasons which in former articles we presented, showing that his arguments were utterly futile, we should have felt that we had something to do. As it is we would just recall to our readers some of the rejoinders we made to Mr. Lawson's statements. Mr. L. says "There is no need for any other poetical compositions in the service of praise than the Psalms." We think there is need of other hymns to express our Christian sentiment; our Christian gratitude for salvation accomplished; our views of the Saviour's life, death and work; their relation to our life, death and work, and a thousand things which the Psalms do not, or only dimly, express. This reason of Mr. Lawson's stands out evidently and absolutely discredited. The Christian consciousness says it is false. Mr. Lawson says: "They were composed by Divine inspiration for the very purpose of being used in praise." That position we do not controvert. That they were exclusively used from the time of David, would be more correct; some of them were so used, for many of them were not composed till long after. "That they were compiled under the superintendence of the Divine Spirit when the Jewish era was near its close, and therefore could not have been intended only for the outgoing, but also for the incoming Dispensation," is one of the sheerest assump-

tions. Why, the greater part of them had been compiled in the days of Hezekiah, and the last addition was made not near the close of the Jewish Dispensation, but between then and four hundred years before that time. "That the Saviour did not abrogate the Psalmody" we know, and we know that he did not abrogate instrumental music. "He did not give directions for His apostles to prepare a Psalm book," says Mr. Lawson; but he prepared no formula of worship whatever, but used that which was in force in his day, leaving it to the Church to develop in accordance with the charisma with which they were endowed. And so we find that there were in the Corinthian Church persons who had Psalms (see 1 Cor. xiv., 26,) introduced into the assemblies—without doubt original. The account which Neander gives of the church Psalmody in the first century is worthy of notice. He says, "Church Psalmody also passed over from the Synagogue into the Christian Church. The Apostle Paul exhorts the Primitive Churches to sing spiritual songs. For this purpose were used the Psalms of the Old Testament, and partly *hymns composed expressly for this object*, especially hymns of praise and prayer to God and to Christ; such having been known to Pliny as in customary use among the Christians of his time. In the controversies with the Unitarians at the end of the second and beginning of the third centuries, the *hymns* were appealed to in which from early times Christ had been worshipped as God." So that Mr. Lawson's statement that the early Christians sung exclusively the words of the Psalms, is unsupported. We can appeal to the Church at the close of the second century as affirming that hymns had been used in the Divine service from the earliest days of the Christian worship. Indeed about their existence from the earlier date there was no controversy. The subject matter of dispute was *what was the doctrine implied in the hymns of such acknowledged antiquity*.

Mr. Lawson talks of the law of psalmody, of abrogating psalmody, of giving directions for the preparation of a new Psalm book, just as though Christianity was to be in the intention of its founder another: "law of commandments contained in ordinances," a set of cast iron regulations, a procrustean bed, on which every custom introduced by the free spirit should be stretched and docked to the right length. Directions to the apostles to prepare a book of hymns would have effectually prevented the use of such glorious songs as those of the after ages in which Mr. Lawson delights in his secret soul, though his prejudices prevent him from using them in the congregation. Jesus had no intention of so curbing and cramping the spirit of his followers. The inspiration of the favored few was to become the heritage of all—the old men should see visions and the young men dream dreams; upon the servants and hand-maidens was to be poured out the spirit of prophecy, and every one, according to the natural gift, was to become a teacher, prophet, or psalmist; such evidently were in the Church at Corinth. But only think of the disciples sitting down to compose a book of hymns according to the supposed absurd directions of the Master. Hymns are not thus to be made to order, and the new faith must wait a little till the poets have developed in the atmosphere of Christianity. The Jewish religion had to wait many hundred years ere it had a suitable bard, and all along the subsequent ages it was receiving additions to its volume; and so the

Christian faith had to be content for a while with the book prepared already, and afterward with such additions as the ages brought gradually to the approval of the Christian consciousness. These cast iron forms and rules which seem so much in favour with Mr. Lawson, were altogether contrary to the spirit of the Master, and of the free community which He came to establish. We would say in view of the attempts made from time to time to put a yoke on the neck of the Christian, "Stand fast in the liberty with which Christ hath made you free, and be not again entangled with the yoke of bondage."

Mr. Lawson says he knows of no New Testament Hymus. We had humbly hoped that the Songs of the Angels, the Magnificat, the songs of Zacharias and Simeon would have been permitted to rank as New Testament Hymns. We have very little doubt that they were used from the earliest ages as part of the Christian Psalmody—and noble hymns they are—inspired too. What stuff is it to talk of there being no authority for our singing them in Christian Worship. They bear their own authority in their inspiration, their beauty, their adaptation to express our sentiments of praise. Those who would not have them in a Christian Psalmody would not receive a Paul without some Epistle of commendation from some Church. It is well enough to guard against imposition from traders in tinsel and glass, but when we are asked to accept gems of incalculable worth, we would betray too much squeamishness to refuse for want of some formal certificate.

Mr. Lawson labors hard to show that we have no need of hymns in which the name of Jesus is celebrated. He thinks we have what is meant by it, and that that is enough. While agreeing that Christ is much spoken of in the Psalms we hold that that is not enough, and that we should in addition be at liberty sometimes to hear in Christian worship the name of Jesus, and to sing in the terms which the Christian consciousness feels to be adequate, our gratitude and praise of His completed work. Mr. Lawson undertook a very needless task for the purpose of this argument in counting the number of times the name of Jesus occurs in the Scottish Hymnal, and made a very false deduction in logic from his arithmetical calculation. He says he found, out of 200 hymns, specially Christian, only 46 contained the name of Jesus, and his sapient conclusion is that because we ask that the name of Jesus shall sometimes appear in a Christian hymn book we ought to cast out all the hymns which do not mention that name. Why, we do not object to the use of the Psalms—or hymns which do not contain the name of Jesus—but we object to be bound down exclusively to the use of them, as we would wish to have at least a few, which contain the name and celebrate the completed work, not merely in typical form, as is the case in all the psalms—however historical may be their aspect—(David, Solomon, or some other being the picture or type of him who was afterward to combine in himself all the offices and work of the prophets, priests and kings of history)—but in the fulfilled and completed form which we can find a solid basis for only in the New Testament history.

Mr. Lawson's argument for an essential distinction between praise and prayer just amounts to this, that they are *different in form*—in prayer one leads, in praise all join; in prayer we use plain prose, in praise verse

and music; they are "distinct exercises," "the attitude is different;" their "*immediate design*" is different—yet Mr. Lawson admits that many of the psalms are prayers and fit to become models of prayer, and he might have added that in almost all prayers there are praises—yet this is what Mr. L. calls an *essential* distinction. Why according to his own showing, the distinction is not essential—but formal. If there be any real distinction it is that between poetry and prose—plain speech and harmonized sounds. After all it is the music that makes the distinction, forms the ground of difference—on account of which we are to have free prayer but nothing save David's Psalms! If any one can convince himself that this is sound reasoning, and that we are bound to the words of David when the same Psalms are used as prayers, with or without singing or music, we do not know that anything we can say would lead him to alter his mind. We entirely agree with Mr. Lawson in one thing, that the requirements we made at his hands might be condensed, and that if the first were proved the other propositions which we develop from it might be dispensed with. But we have shown, and Mr. Lawson by his failure has shown, that the first proposition cannot be established, and that there is no command or authority requiring the exclusive use of David's Psalms in the church's praise.

James B. Smith

To the Editor of the *Telegraph*.

Sir:—In your comments on my last letter, you endeavour to establish a parallel between the *reading* of human compositions at religious meetings, and the *singing* of them in the service of praise; and that because certain persons sometimes engage in the former exercise, they ought not to object to the latter. Now it is not a fact that Reformed Presbyterians ever read "Spurgeon's Sermons" in lieu of God's Word. They never read them as a part of their devotional services, either in the family, the prayer meeting, or the church. Hence there is no parallel between their occasional practice of reading uninspired compositions, in connexion with devotional services, and the practice of those who lay aside an important portion of God's Word, that they may use man's utterances in lieu of it, as a part of the most solemn worship in which one can engage. You say that you would have no objection to a few pages of *Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress*, if a sermon was not available; and neither would I. But that is altogether aside from the question at issue. The question is—would you object to have the Pulpit Bible laid aside, and the *Pilgrim's Progress* substituted? Would you be willing, that in the direct devotional exercises of the congregation, the Bible should be shut, and a portion from Bunyan read in its place? Would not your "moral sense," and that of every Christian in the assembly, be offended? How is it then that your "Christian consciousness" is not equally offended, when in a more heavenly part of religious service, God's Word is laid aside, and human compositions brought in as a substitute. Read and study the words of the Saviour, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Would it be very difficult to establish a parallel between teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, and singing for songs the compositions of men?

Your reference to David's treatment of the Ammonites in putting them "under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, &c.," savours too much of the Tom Paine spirit. He was accustomed scornfully to ask, "Is this the inspiration of God? Was David acting according to the suggestions of Him who is supposed to be wise and merciful, when he thus tortured and destroyed hundreds of human beings?" In reference to that incident, I shall quote the words of Dr. Cumming, of London, "Now some will be surprised," he says, "to learn that the Hebrew word *beth*, which is here translated "under," does not mean *under* (that is, placed beneath), but means *to* (in the sense in which we say, in ordinary language, 'I put him to the plough'); the literal meaning is, that he put them to saws, and to harrows, and to axes, and to the making of bricks—that he made them perpetual working slaves. There is no warrant whatever for the construction that he destroyed them by saws, and harrows, and axes, or inhumanly forced them into the furnace of the brick-kiln. He simply set them to a laborious drudgery." Similar is the testimony of Dr. Adam Clarke. In reference to 1st Chro. XX. : 3, he says: "The meaning is, He made the people *slaves*, and employed them in *sawing, making iron harrows, and in hewing of wood, and making of brick*. Sawing asunder, hacking, chopping, and hewing human beings, have no place in the text—no more than they had in David's conduct towards the Ammonites." Our common Marginal reference Bible reads thus: "Or, made them saw wood, and stones, dig iron, and labour about furnaces."

It is somewhat strange that you should so summarily dismiss the subject of the Imprecations, especially under the plea that "it is only distantly related" to the question of the appointment of the Psalms to be sung in the Christian Church. You, evidently, did not consider the point "only distantly related" to the main question, at the commencement of our correspondence; when you propounded the theory, and fought so bravely to maintain it, that the imprecatory Psalms are wholly irreconcilable with the Christian spirit. But now that you have utterly failed to establish your position, you have opportunely discovered, that its relation to the main question is only remote. Now I cannot accept your plea as correct. The question of the imprecations is a most vital one in the controversy, and demands a thorough ventilation. The common outcry against the Psalms is, that they are "full of cursings"—that many of them are utterly inconsistent with the Christian spirit, and ought not to be sung in the Christian Church. It is very evident that, if that indictment can be proved, the question is settled; the Psalms ought to be excluded from Christian praise. If the indictment cannot be sustained by scriptural argument, it ought to be withdrawn. And as you have utterly failed to establish the impeachment, except by the substitution of assertion for argument, you owe it to those Psalms whose reputation you have assailed, and to that Spirit who indited them, to acknowledge your failure, and to withdraw your indictment, instead of taking refuge in the plea, that it is "only distantly related" to the main question at issue.

In reference to my statement that "there is no need for any other poetical compositions in the service of praise, than the Psalms of David," you say: "This reason of Mr. Lawson's stands out evidently and abso-

lutely discredited. The Christian consciousness says, it is false." In this, as in most of your comments, you make assertion do the work of argument. That which you call "consciousness" is imperfect even in the wisest and best of men, and is therefore an unsafe rule of either faith or practice. What is true or false, is not to be determined, Quaker fashion, by "the voice within" but by the written Word without. "Christian consciousness" is a very variable thing. That which approves itself as true to the consciousness of one Christian may be absolutely discredited by another. If Christians are, therefore, to determine their creed and their practice by an ever varying consciousness, how are they to "walk by the same rule and mind the same things?"

But even assuming that Christian consciousness is a safe rule, there is no truth in the statement, that it pronounces the Book of Psalms to be insufficient for the purposes of Christian praise. On the contrary, the very highest style of "Christian consciousness" that has been ever attained to has spoken out unmistakably in favour of the Psalms, as a sufficient manual of praise. The Waldenses in their Alpine Valleys used nothing but the Psalms, and did not feel the least hampered by the restriction. In the palmiest days of the Reformation in Scotland, your Presbyterian ancestors and mine used exclusively the Psalms, and they did not feel the need of any other sacred songs. The martyred sons and daughters of the Covenant, in Scotland's dark days of persecution, who would rather go to the dungeon, and the scaffold, than violate their consciences, sang exclusively the Psalms. It will not be denied that the Apostles and the early Christians were the very highest types of Christian character. They were "full of the Holy Ghost and faith." Their's was the highest style of Christian consciousness, and yet, as you yourself admit, they were content with the Book of Psalms. They felt no need of any other vehicle of praise. They were satisfied with the "Songs of Zion" as the inspired, the appointed, and sufficient manual of the church's praise.

Did I not fear to burden your pages unduly, I could quote many testimonies of those whose "Christian consciousness" was and is of the highest order, in favour of the excellency and sufficiency of the Book of Psalms. Athanasius of the 4th Century says: "Yes, in its pages you find portrayed man's whole life, the emotion of his soul and the frames of his mind. We cannot conceive anything richer than the Book of Psalms." Augustine, addressing God, says: "How did I then converse with thee, when I read the Psalms of David, those songs full of faith, those accents which exclude all pride; how did I address thee in those Psalms; how did they kindle my love to thee!" Calvin declares: "You cannot read any where more glorious praises of God's peculiar grace towards his Church, or of his works; you cannot read any where such an enumeration of man's deliverances or praises for the glorious proofs of his fatherly care for us, or a more perfect representation to praise him becomingly, or more fervent exhortations to the discharge of that holy duty."

To these testimonies I may add that of the Rev. James Bennet, D. D., St. John, N. B., whose opinion you will not be disposed to controvert. In his *Wisdom of the King*, he uses these words: "I may here incidentally notice that, while some of the Psalms are, from their reference to local events, not appropriate to be sung commonly by us, except with due

explanation, and, as it were, translation into spiritual language, it is, in my mind, better to hold by them, and by the paraphrases in our collection, than to have anything to do with the collections of hymns which are in common use in many churches. There is in these hymns and so called psalms so much inanity, and in some instances so much profanity and false doctrine embodied, that I feel almost content to abide by our own Psalms. There are, indeed, obscure allusions; there is much bad versification, obsolete words, &c., which mar their beauty; yet, upon the whole, there are no vehicles of praise equal to them. I would not have you to be opposed to a smoother rendering of these psalms, nor to be opposed to the singing of other passages from Scripture, either versified or in the prose form; still, if this cannot be attained, I think we are better to hold by our time honoured collection, than run after the hymns which are so common."

In reference to what you are pleased to call "the song of the angels, the Magnificat, the song of Zecharias and Simeon," you say: "We have very little doubt that, they were used from the earliest ages, as part of the Christian Psalmody—and noble hymns they are—inspired too. What stuff it is to talk of there being no authority for our singing them in Christian worship." I honestly confess that in your dealing with my statement regarding these New Testament hymns, as you call them, you use an argument which I cannot meet. It is that embodied in your peculiarly elegant utterance—"What stuff!" Such a mode of reasoning has some weight with certain types of mind, and adherence to it is perhaps the best policy, where there is a manifest scantiness of legitimate argument.

Even in the face of that argument, however, I venture on the following remarks: (1) There is no proof that, the utterances of which you speak were *songs* at all. The angels are represented as "praising God, and *saying*." Mary *said*, "my soul doth magnify the Lord." Zecharias "prophesied, *saying*." Simeon "blessed God, and *said*." You just take it for granted that, all this means singing hymns. Now, it is by no means certain that, there was *singing* in any of the cases referred to. One may compose poetry, and recite it, without having any idea of setting it to music, and singing it. Why, then, do you so confidently call them songs? (2) Even supposing them to have been actually sung by the parties, it remains to be proved that, they were used, or intended to be used, in the praises of the Christian Church. You say that, you have very little doubt that they were so used. Even your opinion, however, does not amount to positive proof. To use your own words in relation to another case. "It is one of the sheerest assumptions." You might just as rationally assume that *Erskine's Gospel Sonnets* composed a part of the psalmody of the Secession Church of Scotland, simply because one of its early ministers composed them, as that, because Mary composed the original of the *Magnificat* it was intended to form a part of Christian Psalmody. You have neither the authority of *precept* or *approved example* for the use of it, or any of the others you speak of, in Christian praise. You say: "They bear their own authority, in their inspiration, their beauty, their adaptation to express our sentiments of praise." Yes, how beautifully adapted to express the sentiments of the Editor of the

St. John Daily Telegraph are the words of Mary: "He hath regarded the low estate of his *handmaiden*; for behold from henceforth all generations shall call *me* blessed."

Your allusion to the Corinthian Christians (1 Cor. XIV. : 16) as sanctioning, by their example, the use of original Psalms, is peculiarly unfortunate. Whatever their practice was, the design of the Apostle, in alluding to it, was evidently its condemnation, as disorderly and unedifying. The cause of Hymnology will not gain much by an appeal to any practice from which apostolic sanction was withheld.

In regard to the *practice of the early Church*, you quote the testimony of Neander. He says: "The Apostle Paul exhorts the Primitive Churches to sing spiritual songs. For this purpose were used the Psalms of the Old Testament, and partly hymns composed expressly for this object, especially hymns of praise and prayer to God and to Christ, such having been known to Pliny as in customary use among the Christians of his time. In the controversies with the Unitarians, at the end of the second, and beginning of the third century, the hymns were appealed to, in which, from early times, Christ had been worshipped as God."

Now, in estimating the value of that testimony of Neander to the cause of Hymnology, there are two or three things that require to be considered. (1). In the writings of the Fathers and early church historians, the word "hymns" was oftentimes used to designate the inspired Psalms. Indeed, as used in the early writings, the word should be *always* understood as expressive of the Psalms of David, unless when the scope of the passage requires its application to human compositions. When Neander, therefore, asserts in your quotation, that in the controversies with the Unitarians, the hymns were appealed to, in which, from early times, Christ had been worshipped as God; and when Pliny speaks of the Christians, at an early period, singing hymns to Christ, in which He was celebrated as God, the reference is evidently to the *inspired Psalms*, which are remarkable for their explicit testimony to the Deity of Christ. (2). In his testimony to the use of human hymns in conjunction with the Psalms, Neander does not speak of apostolic days, but a period after the Apostles had gone to their rest. It is not denied that towards the close of the first century, the practice of singing uninspired hymns may have crept into the church, but there is no evidence whatever that, it existed in apostolic days. Of course usage in the church constitutes no authority for any practice, unless it can be traced back to apostolic times, and can be proved to have had the apostolic sanction. It is just at this point that, the argument for uninspired hymns, derived from usage in the church, utterly breaks down. (3). Your historian Neander, speaking of a much later period, and on which the light of history shines more clearly, bears the following testimony: "Besides the Psalms which had been used from the earliest times, and the short doxologies and hymns consisting of verses from the Holy Scriptures, spiritual songs composed by distinguished church teachers were also introduced among the pieces used for public worship in the Western Church. To the last named practice, much opposition, it is true, was expressed. It was demanded that in conformity with the ancient custom, nothing should be used in the music of public worship but what was taken from the Sacred Scriptures."

Now, from that testimony we learn the following facts: First, the singing of Psalms was "the ancient usage": the Psalms "had been used from the earliest times." Second, the introduction of hymns of human composition into the church services met with "much opposition" until the sixth century. The ancient, apostolic custom was to sing the Psalms. The innovation was to introduce uninspired hymns, which met with much opposition. It is an incontrovertible fact that, the apostolic times were Psalm singing times. "In the Acts of the Apostles," says Dr. H. Bonar, "we find once and again the songs of praise ascending from upper rooms, or private chambers, or prison walls, and these, so far as we know, were all in the words of the ancient Psalms, which furnished them with song and hymn." Dr. Killen in his learned work, "The Ancient Church," bears a similar testimony. It is pleasing to notice that the Editor of the *Telegraph* makes the same admission. You say: "and so the Christian faith had to be content for a while with the book prepared already." So that, according to your own admission, there was "a while" that the Christian Church was content with the Book of Psalms. That "while" was the purest and best age of the Church—the Pentecostal age, when "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul" and "walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." Then, the people of God were "content" with the Psalms. The Christian consciousness did not cry out for any other vehicle of praise. They sang the Psalms and nothing but the Psalms, and they felt no "curbing nor cramping" of their spirit in the exercise.

On this historic ground I take my stand. Pentecostal times were Psalm singing times. The best age of the Church's past history was a Psalm singing age. Human hymns in Christian worship came in with the decline of the Church's first faith and purity. They floated in on the rising tide of the great Antichristian apostacy; and they will all be swept away by the rising waters of that great Revival which inspired prophecy predicts; and in the sanctuaries of the Millennial Church, no songs of praise shall be heard but the "grave sweet melody" of the "Songs of Zion."

J. R. LAWSON.