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COMMUNION.

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We aim to establish the following proposition, viz :

“ The Church should not extend communion in sealing ordinances to those, who refuse adherence to her profession or subjection to her government and discipline—or, who refuse to forsake a communion which is inconsistent with the profession that she makes.”

In treating of any controverted subject, it is important and even indispensable that we should carefully “ distinguish between things which differ.” For want of this many mistakes and misapprehensions have occurred—and nowhere more frequently than on this subject of communion. There is no more common fallacy of reasoning than that which is styled in logic the “ undistributed or ambiguous middle term ” of argument—that is, applying what is admitted or proved in

regard to a term or phrase taken in one sense, to the same term or phrase taken in a very different sense, without noting the transition from one meaning to the other. Thus in regard to this subject of communion, the failure to observe the distinction between the term fellowship when applied to the Church visible and when applied to the Church invisible, or, in other words, between Christian communion and Church communion, or ecclesiastical fellowship—has been the fruitful source of errors and mistakes, and the cause of much fruitless and even bitter controversy. Certain it is that the want of observing this distinction has exposed our Church and its position on this subject to much unmerited odium and reproach. We have been stigmatized as bigoted, narrow-minded, illiberal, exclusive, as unchurching and unchristianizing all other denominations and their members, because we refuse to admit them to our communion, or to join with them in the communion of the Lord's Supper.

Now we propose to show that the principle which we have enunciated is one which every

church deserving of the name is bound in consistency to carry out, and which is practically carried out almost universally by every particular church, and that the departures from it are only occasional and very rare, and hence manifestly exceptional. And

First. What is the communion here referred to ?

Answer. It is not Christian communion, or the communion of Saints—for this is that fellowship which ought to exist and does exist among all Christians by virtue of their union to Christ, their common Head, by the indwelling of his Spirit, which cannot be interrupted by denominational distinctions or separations, by distance of time or place, and which can neither be limited or regulated by ecclesiastical law, but is regulated by Christ himself, who admits to or excludes from it, according to his own omniscience of the state and frame of the individual worshiper. Evidently the communion referred to in our article is not internal but external—not Christian, but Church fellowship—for

this latter is the only subject of ecclesiastical regulation. But

Secondly. What is meant by the Church ?

Answer. (1) Not the invisible Church, which is "composed of all the elect who have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head," whether in heaven or on earth ; between whose members a constant, uninterrupted communion is maintained independent of all human organizations or regulations. But evidently

(2.) It is the visible Church which, in the language of our confession, "is composed of all those throughout the world that *profess* the true religion, together with their children." Nor is it of that communion among the members of this visible Church which consists in their common observance of the same ordinances of worship or in the mutual interchange of the offices of love and beneficence as they have opportunity. This is the communion of which the Confession of Faith treats in chapter xxvi. sec. 2, and which it is there declared, and I suppose will be admitted by all, "should be extended, as God

offereth opportunity, unto all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus." (See the passages of Scripture quoted in proof of this section.) There can therefore be no discrepancy between the Confession and this article of our testimony, because they relate to two entirely different subjects. For

Thirdly. It is to be observed that the communion referred to, relates to the visible Church in her present divided condition, and not to the Church Catholic, or Universal Church, as she is represented and contemplated in the New Testament, organically one in the profession of the truth, as she existed in her first organization, and as we believe she will ultimately exist during the Millennium. Whether this divided state of the Church is right or wrong, or whether any particular denomination has a right to exist as a separate organization, does not enter into the present inquiry. We have a right to assume, and we do assume in our proposition in reference to our own Church, that we are justified in maintaining an or-

ganization separate from other branches of the true or Catholic Church of Christ—and so we suppose other denominations assume regarding their organizations. This question of communion is not peculiar to us as a denomination, but belongs to every denomination or separate Church to settle; and which, as we shall see, every Church does determine and regulate by principles and rules peculiar to itself as a distinct organization, as one in some respects independent of every other.

The communion, therefore, of which we speak, is that external fellowship in the observance of sealing ordinances, particularly the Lord's Supper, *which in the present divided state of the visible Church may be extended or withheld, according to the distinctive rules and regulations of each denomination.*

This communion, our declaration states, should not be extended by the Church, by *any* Church, to two classes:

1. To those "who refuse adherence to her profession, or subjection to her government and discipline;" that is, who refuse to become members of the Church—those who are not members.

2. To those "who refuse to forsake a communion which is inconsistent with the profession which she makes;" that is, who are members of other churches from which

she maintains a separation, in keeping up a distinct organization in the same place at the same time.

The first relates to the terms of admission to membership in the Church—the second, to the question of inter-communion or occasional communion between the members of different denominations—two very distinct and different questions, and yet closely connected—both being determined and settled on the same principles. Thus it appears that our proposition contemplates the present divided state of the Church as an existing fact, and simply declares what is the duty of any Church under these circumstances, if she would be faithful to and consistent with the principles of her own organization. The whole question goes back to and involves the right or duty of our branch of the Church to separate or continue separate from other branches which are regarded as Evangelical, that is, true Churches of Christ; if the latter can be justified, then the maintaining of a separate communion in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper follows as a necessary consequence. The two statements in the declaration, therefore, though separate and distinct in themselves, become one in reality—the latter being included in the former—and so may be considered as one.

The simple proposition then which we are called on to prove, is that the Church is bound to confine the communion in sealing ordinances to its members; which in the present divided state of the Church, requires each denomination, so long as it remains separate from other evangelical denominations, to restrict its communion to its own membership. This is the principle of restricted or close communion, as it is called, as maintained by our Church, and the whole of it. It will be seen that this principle differs materially from that of the Baptist Church, which in effect unchurches all other denominations by refusing to recognize their members as members of the Church of Christ. On the contrary, while recognizing other branches of the visible Church as true Churches of Christ, we yet claim the right, and even duty, of maintaining a separate organization in the same place and at the same time, and so of maintaining a separate communion.

BADGE OF MEMBERSHIP.

First. *Because admission to sealing ordinance in any church is the distinctive badge of membership in that church.* Now I suppose it will be admitted by all, that any rite or privilege which is the highest privilege

and distinctive badge of membership in any society, ought to be restricted to the members of that society. If, therefore, admission to sealing ordinances, particularly the Lord's Supper, be regarded as the distinctive privilege and badge of membership in the Church, then it follows that this privilege ought to be restricted to the members of the Church. That it is so regarded, appears from the all but universal practice of our voluntary Churches. In State Churches, it is true—or in places where Church and State are united—it is not possible for the Church to preserve this distinction between her own members and those who make no profession of religion; but even then the members of the parish are admitted to the communion table because they are regarded as members of the Church—the parish and the Church being co-extensive. In this country, however, where the Church is free to exercise its spiritual authority for the admission or exclusion of members, and among the Free Churches of Europe, the fact of admission to membership or exclusion from it, either permanently or temporarily, is indicated by admission to, or exclusion from, the Lord's Supper. This is the well recognized distinction between the Church and the world—between those who simply attend church and

the members—between adherents and communicants. When any are received into membership in any Church, they are recognized as such by admission to sealing ordinances; and when any are excluded or suspended from membership, they are thereby excluded from the Lord's Supper—thus plainly showing that communion in this ordinance is regarded as the distinctive badge and highest privilege of membership in any Church, and ought to be and practically is extended only to those who profess adherence to the Church's profession and subjection to her discipline—that is, to her members.

But further, this communion in sealing ordinances is not only a distinction between those who are and those who are not church members, but also between different denominations or churches. Hence it is a common thing to designate any particular branch of the church as a communion, referring evidently to the communion of the Lord's Supper; as, for example, the Methodist communion, the Presbyterian communion. This recognizes the fact that the Lord's Supper is not only a Christian ordinance, and as such common to all Christian churches, but also, in an important sense, an ecclesiastical or church ordinance, in which is exhibited not

only the difference between the church and the world, but also between the different branches of the visible church itself. Each denomination claims and exercises the right of admitting to or excluding from it, according to its own particular rules of government and discipline, even while admitting that it is the Lord's table; and all that we plead for is the impartial and consistent application of these rules of discipline to those outside, as well as to those inside of her pale; in other words, restricting her communion to her own members. Any other course than this, if followed out to any extent (which, thanks to men's logic being stronger than their theories, it is not), would be subversive, not only of all discipline, but even of the church's organization itself as a distinct denomination. For if a church does not apply her rules of discipline or admission to her communion in the Lord's Supper to those outside of her own pale, then she ought not to apply those same rules to those within—to her own members. To do so is to make a discrimination against her own members, and in favor of members of other churches; and thus it might, and doubtless often does, occur in the practice of intercommunion or occasional communion, that persons are at one time excluded from the Lord's table by the appli-

cation of the rules of discipline of a particular church to them as members of that church, and, at another time, those same persons, or others like them, are invited and admitted to that communion, because they belong to *another* evangelical denomination—a most absurd inconsistency. For example, a church which disciplines its own members, or excludes them from its fellowship at the Lord's table for rum-selling, slave-holding, or even promiscuous dancing, will cordially invite the same persons to her communion table when they are members of another church whose rules do not exclude these practices. As long, therefore, as churches maintain separate communions, administered according to each one's distinctive rules, the only impartial and consistent course is that which we advocate, and which as a general rule is followed by almost all churches: to restrict communion in sealing ordinances to their own members. And if this is, and ought to be, the general rule, there is nothing either in reason or Scripture to justify an occasional departure from it, unless in cases where the circumstances are so extraordinary as to place them outside of all rules. We have hitherto been reasoning on the supposition that separate organizations involve separate communions, a suppo-

sition which all practically, if they do not theoretically, admit. We say *all*, for the idea, sometimes broached and attempted to be carried into effect, of establishing a kind of universal church or communion, in which all evangelical denominations could unite while still retaining their separate organizations, is only the dream of a disordered imagination, or unionism run mad, and is not likely to meet with very general acceptance among right-thinking people. Thus we have shown that the communion of the Lord's Supper is the highest privilege and the distinctive badge of membership in any church, by the acknowledgment and practice of all churches in admitting to or excluding from it according to each one's own rules of discipline, and that the impartial and consistent carrying out of this principle would limit the communion in each church entirely, as it is now generally, to its own members.

COMMUNION IN A JOINT PROFESSION.

Secondly, the communion of the Lord's Supper ought to be restricted by each church to its own members, because this communion includes in it a public, joint adherence to the same profession of faith, and subjection to the same rule of obedience on the part of

those who unite in the observance of this ordinance—which can only be truthfully done by the members of the same church.

We have already seen that there is in this ordinance not only Christian communion, but also church fellowship. The former takes place only among believers—is founded on their union to Christ, and so partaking of the same body and blood (I Cor. x: 16) by the same faith, is invisible, and regulated only by Christ himself. The latter, and the one of which we speak, is that external, visible fellowship, which all who unite in the observance of this ordinance, whether true believers or not, have with each other in their joint profession of faith in Christ and obedience to him. All communion is founded on agreement. This joint profession must have some common standard of faith and duty, in which all are agreed or united. What is that standard? Does any one say it is the Word of God, which contains the doctrine and law of Christ to be believed and obeyed? Admitted. But the question arises, Is it that Word as interpreted by each individual, or as interpreted by the Church? If it is the private interpretation of each individual, then there is no communion, for there is no common standard of agreement. It must, therefore, be that public and authoritative inter-

pretation of the Word of God by the Church in her standards and Book of Discipline which constitutes the bond of union among her members, and so the common standard of agreement. That visible fellowship or communion which the members of the Church have with each other in the ordinance of the Supper consists in and is measured by their agreement in the same public profession of their faith and subjection to the same rule of duty, which, as we have said, can only be the declared profession and discipline of the Church administering the ordinance. Hence this communion can only be extended by the Church to her own members—who only can consistently and honestly unite in this public profession. To extend it to “those who refuse adherence to her profession, or subjection to her discipline, or who refuse to forsake a communion which is inconsistent with that profession, would be so far to disturb that communion and make it impossible. The question is not whether there is agreement in their private views and feelings among those who sit down to the same table—for that is known only to God—but whether there is agreement in their public profession. If there is, and that public profession is the recognized profession or standard of the Church, then only those who can honestly

join in that profession can consistently join in the observance of that ordinance which, as we have seen, is the badge of membership in any particular church or communion. As this is an important point, let us examine it a little more closely. The question arises, Is there, on the part of the members of the Church, a public profession of adherence to and agreement in the standards of the Church in the observance of the Lord's Supper?—or is it simply a profession of the fact that they are Christians—believers in Christ—that is made in this ordinance? If it is only the latter, then all who are recognized as Christians are entitled to this privilege, and must be admitted and invited to participate in the observance of this ordinance whenever and wherever administered. This is the position taken by the advocates of Catholic communion. The plan is that this is the Lord's table, to which all his children have a right because they are his children, and to refuse any one who is recognized as a Christian is to deny him that to which he has a right. It is confidently affirmed that the Church has no right to exclude any whom Christ himself admits to his table. This sounds specious, and is, in fact, the principal—we might almost say the only—argument in favor of Catholic as opposed to restricted

communion. But when examined closely it will be found to have only the appearance of soundness. It can only be consistently maintained and carried out by confounding or denying the distinction between the visible and invisible Church—between Christian and Church communion—and is in fact maintained and carried out only by those who adopt what is called the Puritan theory of the Church. Here I shall quote from an author who elsewhere advocates open or Catholic communion, and therefore cannot be suspected of prejudice in favor of our position on this subject. I quote from Hodge's *Theology*, vol. 3, page 543 and onward. The quotation is somewhat condensed, but presents his views fairly: "The answer to the question, What are the qualifications for adult baptism, or (what is the same) admission to the Lord's table? resolves itself into the question, What are the qualifications for church membership? The answer to that question it is evident must be determined by the views taken of the nature and prerogatives of the Church. Now there are three generic views of the Church.

"The first is the Romish theory, derived from the ancient Theocracy, and from the analogy between the Church and a civil commonwealth, viz., that all born within its

pale are *ipso facto* its members, and entitled to all its privileges, its sacraments and ordinances—not in virtue of their character, but in virtue of their birthright. This theory obtains not only in Catholic countries, but in all those countries in which Church and State are so united that the head of the State is also the head of the Church, and where membership in the Church is a condition of citizenship in the State. This is the case in Prussia, was the case for centuries in England, and is so to a great extent to this day. Every Englishman, unless he voluntarily makes himself an exception, has a right to all the services of the Church.” I suppose there are few in this country among the evangelical churches who would plead for admission to the Lord’s table according to this theory—allow the State to prescribe the qualifications for admission to this privilege of church membership. But

2. “The second general theory of the nature of the Church is that which for convenience sake may be called the Puritan”—which prevails among the Independents and Congregationalists. “According to them the visible Church consists of the regenerate, and it is the duty and prerogative of the Church to sit in judgment on the question whether the applicant for admission to the

sacraments is truly born of God." In reference to this theory Dr. Hodge justly remarks, that "as Christ has not given his people the power to search the heart, he has not imposed upon them the duty which implies the possession of any such power." Therefore, he adopts the third, or what he calls the common Protestant theory, which is expressed in the Westminster Standards, and which we have already quoted, viz.: "That the visible Church consists of all those who profess the true religion, together with their children," and on it makes this remark: "The common Protestant doctrine is that nothing authorizes us to refuse a man admission to the Church which would not justify his exclusion if already a member of it." And the difference between this theory and what is called the Puritan theory, is just the difference between Catholic and restricted communion. In the language of Dr. Hodge: "According to the one view the Church is bound to be satisfied in its judgment that the applicant is truly regenerate. According to the other, *no such judgment* is expressed or *implied* in receiving any one into the fellowship of the church"—that is to the sacrament or communion of the Lord's Supper. Now, if this be the true theory of the Church, as we believe it is, and if it be true that "as

Christ has not given his people the power to search the heart, he has not imposed upon them the duty which implies the possession of any such power," and if it be so that in receiving an applicant to the fellowship of the Church in the Lord's Supper no judgment is *expressed* or *implied* in regard to his being "truly regenerate," (that is a true Christian); then it follows that the church cannot admit to or exclude from its privileges on the ground of a man's state as regenerate or unregenerate, but only on the ground of his external character and profession, of which alone she is competent to judge. It is true, there is an important sense in which none but Christians, the truly regenerate, have a right to the Lord's table, and that all God's children, in this sense, have that right. But it is a right *in foro Dei*—in the presence or judgment of God—which Christ alone can decide, and which he does decide. This is a matter of which the individual himself is the sole judge at the bar of conscience, and all that the Church can do is to press the injunction of the apostle on all applicants for this privilege. Let a man examine *himself*, and so let him eat of this bread, and leave the responsibility of deciding with the individual. For the Church to decide that a man is a Christian, and so ad-

mit him to the Lord's table, implies the power to decide that he is not, and so exclude him, which is contrary to the express prohibition of Christ in the parable of the tares, and also to his own example in admitting Judas to all the privileges of the other disciples as long as his outward character and conduct was consistent with his profession. That which the Church, therefore, can judge and determine respecting those whom she receives to her communion, and the only thing which she can determine, is competency of knowledge, soundness of profession, and correctness of character and walk, which go to make up a credible outward profession of faith in Christ and obedience to him. And, as we have already seen, the only standard by which this judgment can be made, is the Word of God as she understands and interprets its teachings in her standards of doctrine, worship and discipline. The conclusion, therefore, follows, by an irresistible inference, that those who sit down to the same table in any church do unite in a professed agreement in the public profession of that church as agreeable to and founded on the Word of God so far as they have attained to the knowledge of that word, and that the Church not only has a right, but is bound to limit this privilege to those who adhere to

her profession and are subject to her discipline, or to her own members. In affirming this we do not claim that all who are warrantably admitted to the Lord's table, or to the privilege of church membership, have an intelligent understanding and belief of all the principles of the Church's profession; for many, perhaps the most of them, especially when first admitted, may be but weak in the faith and knowledge of the Gospel. But so far as they know and understand the principles of the Word of God they are agreed in the profession of their faith and do not reject or oppose *any* of the principles of the Church's profession. There is a great difference between those who are weak in the faith and those who determinedly oppose the principles of the Church's profession, or who refuse to forsake a communion that is inconsistent with that profession. The one we are to receive, the other we cannot and ought not to admit to our fellowship.

Thus then it appears, that in the Lord's Supper as administered by any particular Church, besides the Christian communion, which is enjoyed by them as believers, there is an external, visible fellowship on the part of all those who join in its observance as a church ordinance, which consists in their agreement in a common public profession, which can be

no other than that profession which the Church makes as a distinct organization separate from other branches of the Church. It follows, therefore, that this communion can only be extended to its own members, because they only can truthfully and consistently join in this public profession. But it is in the

CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH AS A WITNESS

that all the arguments for restricted communion meet and terminate. It is only when this distinctive characteristic and consequent obligation of the visible Church as a witness for the truth is lost sight of or ignored, that the plea for Catholic or occasional communion acquires any force or plausibility.

3. We argue, therefore, that communion in sealing ordinances ought to be restricted by the Church to its own members, because in no other way can she be faithful to her obligation as a witness for the truth of Christ.

That this character belongs not only to individual Christians who are called martyrs or witnesses, but to the Church as one organized body, will, I suppose, scarcely be denied.

That this is the main distinctive object and design of the organization of the visible

Church appears from the name given to her in the singular number, "the light of the world," "the pillar and ground of the truth." For it is by holding up, and "holding forth the word of life," as a witness for the truth of God in her public profession or testimony, that she acts as the light of the world—as the pillar and ground of the truth. The same thing appears from the character given the disciples of Christ as soldiers, whose duty it is to "fight the good fight of faith," to "war a good warfare," to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints."

There is a great battle going on in the world between truth and error—between right and wrong—between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan; and in this conflict, Christ, as her Divine Head and Leader, employs his Church in her visible organization as his army for overthrowing the kingdom of Satan, and establishing his kingdom in the earth. The weapons of this warfare are not carnal, but spiritual, the truth of God, which is "mighty through God to the pulling down of the strongholds of error" and sin, and the establishment of "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost," in the hearts of men and so in society. This weapon she wields in her organized capacity as a witness, not only for the preservation

but also the propagation of the truth by her public testimony in its behalf and against the contrary error and sin. And so it is said of these martyrs or witnesses, that "they overcame by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony"—that public joint testimony in which they all united, and which they sealed with their blood, not "loving their lives unto the death." But this point is so plain we need not dwell upon it. The only question is, how far does the obligation extend? To what extent is the Church to bear witness to the truth? To this I think only one answer can be given—

1. In general, to the whole truth as she attains to the knowledge of it. The commission given to the Church runs in these words, "Go, disciple all nations, teaching them to observe *all things whatsoever* I have commanded you." There are those who maintain that the Church's testimony should be limited to those fundamental articles of faith and principles of duty which are essential to salvation, in which, therefore, all Christians can unite. But it is evident that the obligation of this duty of the Church must be co-extensive with the reason and ground of it. This reason or ground is the divine authority which extends equally to *all things whatsoever* he has commanded to be received and

observed—to the least as well as the greatest. So says Christ, Matt. v. 19, “Whosoever therefore”—and this applies to the Church as well as to individuals—“shall break one of these least commandments and shall *teach* men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them”—that is the least as well as the greatest—“he shall be called great,” etc. Let it be remembered that it is not the importance of any principle to the salvation of the soul, which constitutes the reason or measures the force of the obligation of a witness in bearing testimony, but simply that it is a part of the truth or law of Christ on which his authority is stamped, and which is recognized by the Church as a part of that truth or law. Every principle of God’s Word may not be equally important to be known and believed in order to salvation; but we may safely affirm that every principle of that Word, when known and acknowledged to be of divine authority, is of equal importance to the integrity of the system and to the honor of Christ, and therefore of equal obligation to be received and maintained by the Church. Indeed, those truths and principles, which in themselves are regarded as of minor importance, may by the circumstances of the Church become the prominent

and pre-eminent ones in her testimony. Which leads me to remark

2. That the Church is to be a witness especially for the present truth—that is the truth which is now opposed and denied, and which becomes, therefore, in an eminent sense, the “word of Christ’s patience.” The most important point for the time to be maintained and defended, is the point attacked. The most important part of a witness’ testimony is that which bears upon the point at issue, so the most prominent part of the testimony of the Church or any particular church for the time, is that part of the divine truth or law which is at present assailed or denied—and the greater and more extensive the opposition, the greater is the obligation of Christ’s witnesses to be faithful to him and his cause in that particular. Matters of doubtful disputation ought not to be admitted into the Church’s testimony; for, these being matters of indifference which are not clearly revealed in the Word of God, or mere matters of opinion and human authority, do not involve the authority of Christ or the honor of his name. But whenever a principle is acknowledged by the Church to be a truth of Christ, or an evil exists which is admitted to be a violation of his law as she understands it, then the fact that the one is denied

and the other defended, even by men and churches sound and right in other things, does not render those points matters of "doubtful disputation"—to be dropped out of sight and eliminated from the testimony of the Church—but as every one can see, renders the obligation to maintain and defend the truth and oppose error and evil more imperative on those who would be faithful to and "stand up for" Jesus. So our fathers in Scotland and England regarded the matter in the 17th century when they refused to conform in what might be regarded as points of minor importance respecting church government, but suffered the loss of station and property, and even life itself, rather than compromise the rights of Christ's crown and covenant. And who will say that they were not justified in their course, even though the points involved are still matters of dispute among Christian men and churches? The fact is that this principle is so well recognized by all the churches of the Reformation, that it has found practical expression in, and given ground or occasion for most, if not all, the denominational divisions which at present exist in the Protestant Church. Which leads me to remark

3. That the only way by which the Church, or any particular church, can maintain a

faithful and consistent testimony in behalf of any truth or law of Christ, is by making it a term of communion. As already intimated, many, if not most, of the present divisions among Protestant evangelical churches—just as the Protestant Church itself—originated in the felt obligation resting on those who wished to be faithful as witnesses for Christ, to separate from those, who, though they were recognized as belonging to the *true* Church of Christ, yet had corrupted or perverted the truth of God in doctrine or worship. The very design, therefore, of their organization as a distinct and separate branch of the Church of Christ, and so maintaining a separate communion, was as faithful witnesses to preserve and maintain the principles of truth and duty thus denied. On this principle have acted dissenters of all kinds, whether Baptists, Methodists or Presbyterians; and this, their felt obligation to be faithful as witnesses for the truth and law of Christ, is the only thing which warrants or justifies such separation and its continuance, without which they would be self-condemned as schismatics. Now in order to carry out the design of their separate organization, and to justify their position and their right to exist as a distinct branch of the Church of Christ, each of these bodies finds it ne-

cessary to set forth the principles of their organization in a public testimony and rules of order and discipline in which they are embodied. In this public profession all the members of the church is supposed to unite, as it is the testimony of the church as a body—composed of the private members as well as the officers.

Now, we ask : How can a church, thus separated from others by the very design of its organization, and claiming that it not only has a right to exist, but is bound to maintain its separation for a distinct and definite purpose—how, we ask, can it make that purpose effective, or carry out its design as a faithful, consistent witness for its peculiar distinctive principles, without making those principles terms of communion, or, in other words, requiring those whom she admits to the highest privilege of membership to adhere to her profession and to be subject to her discipline? It may be affirmed without fear of successful contradiction, that when a church ceases to make any article of her profession a term of communion, she thereby ceases to be a witness for that principle. In word she may hold to it, as some churches before the rebellion held to the evil of slavery, but by admitting slaveholders and their apologists to their communion they

practically contradicted and denied those public utterances, and made them a dead letter—for this simple reason, that actions speak louder than words. The churches of Asia were rebuked, not for any unsoundness of profession, but because they had among them—allowed in their communion—those who held and taught doctrines and practices contrary to the principles of their profession. It was found necessary by those who would not be partakers of the sin of slavery to separate from the communion of the Presbyterian Church and form an organization styled the Free Church. Now, what would have been the value of their professions of sincerity if they had still admitted slaveholders and those who abetted the evil to their communion? What value has the testimony of any Church against intemperance and in favor of temperance which allows rum sellers and rum drinkers in her communion, whether they are her own members or members of other evangelical churches? What would be the value of our testimony against secret societies if their members were not excluded from our communion? The Church is not responsible for the private heresies or sins of those admitted to her communion, but when any one is known to hold and maintain principles and

practices contrary to the Word of God, according to her profession, whether he be an officer or private member, she becomes the partaker of his error or sin, and is unfaithful to her own profession when she allows, and as long as she allows, him in her communion at the Lord's table. Now, supposing he be cut off and excluded from her fellowship and goes and joins another branch of the Church which, as a body, holds and maintains the same doctrines and practices, does the fact of his becoming a member in good standing in another Church change the character and effect of admitting him again to her communion, and make it different from what it was when he was one of her own members? Every one can see the inconsistency of such a course. The only way, therefore, by which a Church can make her testimony for the truth of her profession practically effective is by excluding from her communion those who, whether as individuals or as members of other churches, are engaged in a stated and determined opposition to any of the principles of that profession. The practice of discriminate or occasional inter-communion tends to break down all discipline and thus nullify the effectiveness of the Church's testimony for the truth and right, and against error and wrong. We

conclude, therefore, as we begin, that “the Church should not extend communion in sealing ordinances to those who refuse adherence to her profession or subjection to her government and discipline, or who refuse to forsake a communion which is inconsistent with the profession which she makes.”

OBJECTIONS.

It may be asked, Are there no exceptions to this rule—no cases when a session may admit one who is not a member of the Church, or who is a member of another Church?

We answer that no Church can make provision for exceptions, either in her testimony or rules of discipline, without constituting those exceptions into a rule. The very fact that they are exceptional cases, places them outside of all rules—and each case must be decided on its own merits. When, therefore, a session in the exercise of that discretion which belongs to all courts in the application of the law of the Church decides that any particular case is extraordinary and exceptional, it thereby decides that it is outside of the rule, and so one to which the law is not applicable. But no session or any other court, not even the General Assembly, has rightful power or discretion to admit a case

which violates or is inconsistent with the plain meaning of the organic law or rule of the Church. This would be a virtual repeal or nullification of the law. Such we believe to be the true and obvious meaning of the deliverance of the General Assembly at Argyle in 1868, which is so often quoted as releasing the stringency of this article of the testimony.

Again, it is objected that in heaven we will be all one, and commune together there; and why not here? We answer, it is just because we are not come to heaven, and we are not one in our views and beliefs, which renders the present separation or division of churches necessary.

If the Church were what it ought to be and what it eventually will be, organically one even here on earth, then we could, as we will one day, all sit down together in the kingdom of God. It is the present divided condition of the Church which renders this separate communion necessary.

Other objections might be noticed, but they have either been answered in the foregoing discussion, or are such as may be easily disposed of by the application of the principles there laid down.

We have thus attempted the vindication in this article of our testimony—not by appeal-

ing to personal or partisan considerations, or by denunciations of other individuals or churches, but by an appeal to principles which are universally recognized and accepted as applicable to all churches, assuming that they are justified in maintaining their separate organizations. And we humbly and respectfully submit these considerations to the candid and impartial judgment of our brethren in our own Church and in other churches who are concerned to know what faithfulness to the cause and truth of our common Master requires at our hands—whether as individuals or as churches. May the Lord himself own his truth, and pardon and overrule our errors and mistakes; and to his name shall be the praise.

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SECRET SOCIETIES.

[J. G. Carson, D.D.]

The Relation and Duty of the Church and
her Members toward them.

It is proposed to establish the truth of the following proposition, viz: "That associations formed for political, benevolent or other purposes, which impose upon their members an oath of secrecy, or an obligation to obey a code of unknown laws are inconsistent with the genius and spirit of Christianity, and church members ought not to have fellowship with them."

This declaration contains a statement of principle, and an inference from it: the latter following as an irresistible consequence from the former: for if we can show that these associations in spirit and

workings, are inconsistent with those principles of God's word, which Christians universally recognize as of paramount obligation, then it will follow that members of the church—not of this or that one, but of every church, ought not to have fellowship with them. And if Christians can but be convinced of the sinfulness of their connection with such associations, and be persuaded to sever or keep aloof from all such connection; if the church of God would but use her influence and lift up her testimony against this great and growing evil of secretism, the power of these societies, for evil, would be so weakened as to excite little alarm. And on the other hand, the presence of church members in them, and the silent indifference or active encouragement of the church of God regarding them, is that which gives them respectability and constitutes the chief part of their strength, just as formerly was the case with slavery in this land.

The church cannot afford to occupy a neutral, much less a friendly position

towards them; for, if they belong to the “unfruitful works of darkness,” as I think can easily be shown, then she is bound not only “to have no fellowship with them, but rather to reprove them.” If, as I think will be evident as we proceed, they belong to the world that lieth in the wicked one—the god of this world—then they are the enemies of Christ and his kingdom, from which she is bound to maintain a complete separation, and with which she must wage an uncompromising war. And what is the duty of the church is the duty of individual Christians.

The question is one of intensely practical importance, and nothing can be more amazing than the apparent apathy and indifference of the churches generally on this subject, as formerly on the subject of slavery, unless it be the impudence and arrogance of these societies in claiming recognition and encouragement and at the same time resisting and bitterly resenting all investigation and judgment of the character and truth of these claims. Indeed the very

attempt to screen themselves from public observation, and honest, candid investigation, is itself a confession of weakness and is the old cry of the demons, to which the enemies of Christ and truth have always resorted to stifle inquiry, saying, "Let us alone, what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth?" But despite all these attempts by ridicule, defamation, and even persecution and violence to stop our mouths, we claim the right in the name of the Master, and are bound in faithfulness to Him—and to this point it must come sooner or later with all the churches, to inquire, "Art thou for us, or for our enemies?"—"to try the spirits whether they are of God."

Now, in the pursuit of this inquiry it is not necessary for us to become members of these societies, or to pry into what they call their secrets in order to ascertain their true character. We need only to examine the principles which confessedly underlie their organization, and the character and tendency of their legitimate workings, and

show that these are inconsistent with the principles laid down in the word of God. "To the law and to the testimony if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them." Nor is it necessary to deny that there is anything good in these associations, or to assert that all of them are equally bad. But if on the whole they are evil in their tendency and workings; if there are some things necessarily belonging to all of them which are wrong and sinful; if connection with any of them involves the Christian in acts of at least doubtful propriety, and closes his mouth against the acknowledged evils of the more dangerous societies, then we are warranted in drawing the conclusion that Christians ought not to have fellowship with them; and if I shall succeed in persuading a single one of my fellow Christians, who have become entangled in the snare of unholy conformity, to break that connection, or prevent any one from becoming involved in such connection, I shall feel amply rewarded. I appeal to your understanding, not to your prejudices; to your reason and conscience, not to your passions. "I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say."

I. PRINCIPLES OF THE ORGANIZATION.

1st. The first reason I would offer why these associations are inconsistent with the genius and spirit of Christianity, is that *they constitute an artificial relation of fraternity or brotherhood, the obligations of which are inconsistent with the duties we owe to our fellow men in those relations which God has established and in which he has placed us.*

God has instituted the brotherhoods of man or society, of the family, and of the church. These have their foundations either in the nature of man, or in his relation to God through Christ. The obligations of these relations, the family, the church, and the state, are divinely imposed; are neither arbitrary nor voluntary; which can neither be assumed nor laid aside at pleasure. Every one is born into the family, and into society, and even when joining the church (as we express it,) although in one sense a voluntary act, yet he thereby merely recognizes and acknowledges those obligations which every one owes to his God and Saviour. These relations being thus divinely appointed and regulated, are designed and adapted to move on together

and co-operate harmoniously like the planets of the solar system in their several spheres, their duties and obligations neither interfering nor conflicting with each other. But it is not so with these associations. The relation of fraternity which they form is a purely artificial one, having its foundation neither in nature nor in grace. Certainly it is not of Divine institution, and cannot be referred to any of those natural or gracious relations which he has instituted, the duties and obligations of which are imposed by purely human authority, self-assumed and self-imposed. Hence arises, and must necessarily arise, discord, corruption, conflict, just as if a new planet were introduced into the solar system by some other power than that of God.

Here is a relation, a brotherhood, whose tie cuts right across all other relations, enters the family, interfering between parents and children, husband and wife, brothers and sisters; enters society, interferes with its various relations both civil and social; enters the church, coming between pastor and people, and between members of the same church, often producing alienation and distrust if not positive discord and conflict. It is in vain to say that membership in these societies need not conflict

with a man's duty in his other relations. In the very nature of things they must conflict, and as a matter of fact we all know and see that they do conflict in multitudes of instances; and when the obligation of these societies is regarded at all it becomes necessarily paramount to all others. Instances might be given illustrating this in the family (as at funerals), in the state (as in the case of judge and juries), and in the church (as between pastors and people.)

To this principle our Lord refers when he charges the Pharisees with making void the law of God by their traditions. They had invented an artificial relation with its appropriate sign, or pass-word, by which they undertook to set aside the obligation of children to their parents. The law of God said, Honor thy father and mother, and whosoever hateth father and mother let him die the death; but ye say, "If a man shall say to his father or mother, Corban, that is to say, it is a gift by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, he shall be free; making the word of God of none effect by your traditions:" *Mark, 7: 10-12.* Precisely on the same principle do these associations come between those whom God hath joined together in the

various relations of life, making distinctions where God has made none either in nature or grace; thus producing disturbance, unsettling confidence, and introducing suspicion, alienation, strife. Now, while it is improper for any one to enter a society which does or may conflict with the duties he owes to his fellow men in the other relations of life, it is especially wrong and inconsistent for a Christian to do so. The very principle on which these societies are organized is that of caste, and their obligation requires them to help each other in preference to all outside, no matter how closely connected these outside ones may be otherwise. I do not say that this obligation is always regarded as paramount, but I do know that this principle of favoritism belongs to all these associations, is avowed by them, and urged, indeed, as one of the most powerful inducements for members to join them, viz.: the superior advantages to be enjoyed in various ways from the patronage, support and assistance of their fellow members to which they are all mutually pledged. I do know, also, that many regard their obligation in this light, and treat it as paramount to all others. A Presbyterian elder, when asked the question, if two men claimed his assistance

equally needy, the one a Christian or fellow member of the church, and the other a fellow Mason, which he would feel bound to prefer, answered without hesitation, "The Mason." Another stated, that if the claims of his mother and those of a brother Mason came in conflict he should feel bound to regard the latter before the former; and, indeed, this, as we have said, seems to be the natural and obvious meaning of this pledge of brotherhood and mutual help, if it have any obligation at all. The only way in which the Christian can maintain the integrity of his conscience between these conflicting claims is by treating this artificial obligation as a nullity. Now every one can see how a conscientious judge or juryman sworn to administer impartial justice between the parties brought before them would feel himself, to say the least, embarrassed by his relation to one of them as a member of the same fraternity. Has any one, much less a Christian, a right voluntarily to place himself in a relation the obligation of which he must either disregard and treat as a nullity, or else violate his obligation to his fellow men in the other relations in which God has placed him. Partiality, favoritism, the making of

discriminations among men on the ground of fictitious or artificial distinctions which is the very essence of these associations, is just as unwarranted and inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity as the same partiality would be unjust and unwarrantable in a judge on the bench. *James 2: 1, 2:* "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him: Sit thou here in a good place, and say to the poor, Stand thou there or sit here under my footstool, are ye not, then, partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts, or as it ought to be rendered, ill-reasoning judges?" Therefore we say these associations, the very principle of whose organization requires their members to exercise this partiality towards their fellow members are inconsistent with the genius and spirit of Christianity.

2nd. The second reason why these associations are inconsistent with the genius of Christianity is because the obedience which they require of their members to their superiors

is inconsistent with that supreme allegiance which every Christian has vowed and owes to Christ.

The spirit of these orders, whether religious or secular, is that of an unmitigated despotism, requiring an obedience which is implicit and unquestioning. This is seen most fully in the society of Jesuits, the prime qualification of whose members is an entire subjection of their will to that of their superiors; and although all these secret orders do not go to the same length as do these Jesuits, or even the Masons, yet their spirit and tendency is the same, and so far as they are allowed to exert their legitimate influence, the effect is to destroy all independence of thought, speech, or action on the part of their members and render them passive tools in the hands of their superiors or the orders they represent. This is symbolized in some of their ceremonies, inculcated in their lectures, and expressed in the subordination of the various degrees and in the high-sounding titles given to their officers—Masters—Grand Masters—Most Puissant Potentate, &c. Indeed, obedience to the Master is one of the cardinal virtues in their orders. And of their power to exact this obedience, when

they deem it necessary, let the abduction and murder of Morgan bear witness; and also that intolerant spirit everywhere manifested by these orders which aims to fetter the freedom of speech and of the press, and which prevails to muzzle editors, publishers, and public speakers, and even the ministers of Jesus Christ, most of whom dare not utter their own convictions, and can hardly call their souls their own. Now, while any one who has any regard to his own manhood ought to scorn to place himself in subjection to any will or authority less than Divine, it is specially unworthy of the Christian, who as the Lord's servant, is free from both the doctrine and commandments of men. "Ye are bought with a price, be ye not the servants of men." "Call no man master, neither be ye called master, for one is your Master even Christ." To Him every Christian owes and cheerfully acknowledges implicit subjection—entire and unreserved obedience. He only is worthy of it and entitled to it, because He is God; nor dare any Christian, on peril of treason to his Lord, acknowledge or promise subjection to any man or set of men only in the Lord. It is only so far as they represent the authority of Christ that

we owe obedience to our superiors in the family, the state, or the church. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord for this is right. Wives are to be in subjection unto their husbands, as unto Christ. Citizens are to obey civil magistrates because they are ministers of God. The powers that be are ordained of God, and we owe this obedience not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake, because they represent the authority of God in all their lawful commands; and even in the church, Christians are under obligations to those who have the rule over them only in the Lord, that is, so far as they represent the authority of Christ; anything else than this is rank popery, culminating in the Jesuitical dogma of papal infallibility. Now it may be safely affirmed that the subjection which membership in these orders involves is worse, more inconsistent with Christian liberty, than popery itself, because the priest and the pope have some shadow of pretension for their claims to implicit subjection because they pretend to be the vicars of Christ and to represent his authority. But where in all these orders is there even a pretense of representing His authority? Where in all the word of God

has he given them authority to command my obedience, and how can I, consistently with my supreme allegiance to him, voluntarily place myself in subjection to any such usurped authority, or promise *any kind* of obedience to it, when it is not and can not be obedience *in the Lord*? Surely Christians and Christian ministers especially, who ought to be so jealous even of their lawful superiors where their authority infringes upon or conflicts with that of Christ, must see that in joining these orders they are renouncing their allegiance to him, and promising subjection to those who neither pretend to represent the authority of Christ nor can ever claim obedience to any of their behests on the ground of that authority. "And no man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other." If there were no other reason than this one, it is sufficient of itself, one would think, to convince any conscientious Christian that these associations are inconsistent with the genius and spirit of Christianity.

3rd. *Because the morality and benevolence which they inculcate and practice are selfish and partial, and so inconsistent with*

the genius and spirit of Christ, and ought not to be encouraged or patronized by Christians. The whole system from beginning to end is just a system of organized selfishness. Instead of being governed by that royal law of Christ: "As ye would that man should do unto you, do ye even so unto them," the Christian in these societies finds himself restricted and narrowed down to this miserable law of selfishness: Do to others as you expect them to do to you; which is the rule and limit both of their morality and benevolence, so called.

(1.) Their *morality* is *selfish* and *partial*, although the professions which some of these societies make of being the special patrons and teachers of morality, may at first sight appear plausible, yet when we come to inquire into the principle which underlies their so-called morality, it will be found nothing more than a species of a personal honor—a somewhat extended kind of selfishness. (It is true, they inculcate friendship, love, and truth, and oblige their members to abstain from injustice, wrong or injury. But to what extent? Toward all men? O, no! only toward their fellow members,—and why even toward them? Because the one is right and the other

wrong? that is, required or forbidden by the law of God, the only standard of true morality? O, no! for this would require them to make the obligation universal and extend it to all men, which would destroy their very character as exclusive mutual aid societies. Take for illustration the Masonic fraternity. The obligation of this order requires its members to act honestly and uprightly towards their fellow members, and to abstain from injury towards them or their wives or sisters. This implies a license to act otherwise towards all others; that is to say, if they are restrained from acting unjustly towards others, it is from some other principle than their Masonic obligation; such injustice and immorality does not affect their standing in the order, nor is it considered or treated as a breach of Masonic obligation. The most dishonest and immoral men can and do maintain their standing in the order, provided their offenses are not against Masonic law. What is this but a species of worldly honor, and no more deserves the name of morality than that honesty which may be found among thieves and banditti.

That I do not overstate this matter let me refer to an instance that I have seen

quoted by their own writers as an illustration of the superior excellence and advantage of the Masonic obligation; and many similar instances might be given from our own rebellion and the Sepoy rebellion in India. A pirate captured a vessel and murdered all its inmates except two, who were Masons as he was. Here was one who considered his obligations of Masonic morality limited to his own order, and whose multiplied crimes of fiendish cruelty did not affect his standing as a Mason, so long as he refrained from injuring his fellow Masons. Is it not worse than a misnomer to call such conduct by the name of morality, or to compare it for a moment with that universal honesty and integrity of character and conduct which the gospel of Christ not only teaches, but produces? "Teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world," the disregard of which in regard to the poorest and humblest human being, would not only, if known, affect the Christian standing of the most eminent minister or member of the church, but would destroy the reputation and standing of any church which should tolerate such an one in its membership for an hour. And yet, I repeat, this

is the extent of the morality which the Masonic order, as such, (and the same is true, to a certain extent, of the others,) inculcates and enforces—simply and solely the morality of selfishness. How degrading to, and unworthy of, the Christian to lend the sanction of his name and influence to any such caricature and fraud, by which thousands are deluded into the thought and belief, that with such false and spurious morality as their religion they can be as good Christians as church members, and fitted at death for entrance into heaven, or the Grand Lodge above. Surely Christians instead of having any fellowship with, ought to expose and testify against all such miserable pretences as dishonoring to Christ and ruinous to the souls of men. The same substantially may be said of their—

(2.) *Benevolence*; which like their morality is both *partial* and *selfish*. Many of these associations claim to be benevolent and charitable, even above the church; and there are some Christians who are base enough and silly enough to echo their claims, not only inside, but outside of these orders. Now, whatever may be said of the short-comings, in this respect, of individual members, or even of the church, yet we

dare affirm that the only true charity and benevolence that is found in the world, and even in these orders themselves, is due to the presence and influence of the Christian religion, and that what goes under the name of benevolence as inculcated and received by these associations, is not worthy to be compared to that large-hearted and universal philanthropy, and active benevolence which Christianity not only teaches but produces in all who embrace its doctrines.

(a.) Their benevolence is limited to their own members. It not only begins but it ends at home. The difference between it and true Christian benevolence may be seen in the parable of the good Samaritan. While the priest and the Levite who found the man that had fallen among thieves, passed by on the other side, because he did not belong to their order, the good Samaritan stopped to ask no questions, but recognizing a brother's claim on his sympathy in the distress of a stranger or even an enemy, he "bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, carried him to an inn and took care of him." And the injunction with which our Lord closes the parable, "Go thou and do likewise," stands on

record as a withering rebuke to that narrow-minded selfishness which stops to ask, "Who is my neighbor," and makes the world-wide difference between true Christian beneficence and that charity falsely so-called which is confined to a particular order or caste.

Even this limitation, however, would not be so blameworthy if the doors of these orders were, like those of the church, opened wide for the admission of all classes. But it is not so. Most of them exclude women, minors, the aged, the poor, lame, halt and blind, those who are not able to pay their dues, or have no visible means of support, the very classes that are likely to become objects of charity; and when those who are members cease to pay their dues, even though unable to do so, they forfeit their claim on the assistance of the order at the very time when they most need it. Thus their boasted benevolence, limited as it is to their own members, dwindles down into a simple re-payment of what has already been paid for, like any other insurance policy, and that at a very dear rate of premium. An examination of their own reports will show, that while the larger proportion of the vast incomes of some of

these orders is expended in mere pomp and show, it is a comparatively trifling amount that goes to the relief of the needy and suffering. The amount expended by one of the smaller branches of the church in this land for really benevolent objects far exceeds that of the strongest and wealthiest of these orders. So that the assertion that the benevolence of these orders excels that of the church is a false and a base slander.

(b.) Let it be remembered, also, that whatever is done by the members of these societies, even Christian members, redounds to the credit of the order and not to Christ. While the church of God teaches as the law of her Head, the duty of doing good to all men as we have opportunity, and actually exercises through her membership all the benevolence worthy of the name that aims to bless and elevate suffering humanity; yet all the honor of it is cheerfully ascribed to Christ, and not to any man or organization. Our Lord said to his disciples, "When thou doest alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be seen of men: Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward." This is just what these societies

do, and doubtless this is one reason why we hear so much more of their benevolence just because the end and object of it is self-glorification. How can a Christian consistently lend his countenance and name to that which detracts from the glory of his Master, and seeks the praise of men and not of God.

(c.) Moreover, in the day of final reckoning only those good deeds that are done in the *name of Christ* and for *his sake* will be regarded as worthy of mention. And measured by this standard, love to Christ and to our fellow men for his sake, all the boasted charity of these orders will be cast out as spurious and worthless, being nothing more than a species of selfishness: "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to *me*." Thus the whole influence of these associations, as combinations for selfish purposes, in their selfish morality and selfish benevolence, serves to foster and strengthen this principle of evil in the individual and in society, and so instead of assisting the church it opposes an ever increasing barrier to the influence of Christianity through the church and upon the

world at large. For this reason then Christians should have no fellowship with them.

4th. *Fellowship with these societies is inconsistent with that separation from the world which is essential to the Christian character.* This is of itself sufficient and conclusive reason why Christians should not have connection with them. That these societies belong to the world will hardly be disputed. They cannot claim, they will hardly pretend to be of Divine institution; their origin is in the world; the principles of their organization are of the world; their morality and benevolence are worldly; their aims and ends are worldly and selfish, and their membership is largely, and we may safely say predominantly, from the world, composed of all sorts, men of all religions and of no religion at all; Jews and Gentiles, Greeks, Mohammedans, pagans, infidels, ungodly and wicked men in equally good standing with Christians or ministers of the Gospel. Now, there is nothing more plainly revealed in the word of God than this, that the world which lieth in the wicked one is the great enemy of Christ, and that whosoever is the friend of the world is the enemy of God. There

is no duty more frequently insisted on in the Bible than that of Christians maintaining a complete and universal separation from the world. In the language of Mr. Moody, "With the Bible open before me I can not see what right any child of God has to go and yoke himself with unbelievers in business or in secret societies, or in any other society. If you say it is to do good, you can do more good without them than you can possibly do by identifying yourself with them; Abraham had more influence over Sodom away up in Hebron than Lot had there in Sodom." This is strong language, but is it not true? The people of Israel were expressly forbidden to make covenants of peace and friendship, or enter into any alliance whether by marriage with the surrounding nations, and nothing was a more fruitful source of corruption and consequent calamity to that nation than the neglect or disregard of this prohibition. The same principle applies to the church of God to-day. The command, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" has reference not merely, nor even principally to the marriage relation. But from the reasons assigned it is evident that the injunction applies with

special force to just such associations as these fraternities which bring together in the closest bonds of fellowship, friendship and even brotherhood, Christian and infidel, believer and unbeliever, the friends and enemies of Christ: "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols; for ye are the temple of the living God." Language could not more strongly impress the relation and duty of the church and its members towards these secret societies. While we are not prohibited from all intercourse with men of the world in the affairs of business, or in those relations of civil society, in which God has placed us, yet neither with individuals nor associations are we at liberty to form covenants of friendship or brotherhood. The attitude of the church to the world is that of constant, uncompromising hostility, and the obligation on the church and its members to-day is just as strict and imperative as ever to maintain a complete and entire separation from it, both in order to preserve

their freedom from its corrupting influences and to maintain a testimony against its evils. The voice of Christ, which is the voice of duty and the voice of wisdom, cries aloud to every Christian, "Come out from among them and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing." "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them;" and only by obeying this voice by the way of requiring her members to abstain from all connection with these societies, can the church of Christ "keep herself unspotted from the world," avoid compromise with its evils, and be free from its corrupting influences and its final condemnation.

Thus I have presented considerations which apply to all these associations, from the very principles of their organization, the force of which every Christian heart will feel and appreciate, and which to every candid mind must appear conclusive: "That these associations, whether formed for political or benevolent purposes, are in their very nature inconsistent with the genius and spirit of Christianity, and church members ought not to have fellowship with them." I have dwelt thus long on this part of the subject because it occupies

ground which I humbly conceive has not hitherto received the consideration which its importance demands, and because the considerations presented can be understood and appreciated as well as by those outside as by those inside of these orders.

II. THEIR SECRECY.

5th. Another reason why these associations are inconsistent with the genius of Christianity is *because the secrecy which they affect, and to which they bind their members by promise or oath, is unnecessary and so unwarrantable, dangerous, and ensnaring to the conscience, and therefore utterly opposed to that openness and publicity which Christ enjoins on his disciples both by example and precept.* "I ever spoke openly in the synagogues and in secret have I said nothing." "Ye are the light of the world." "Let your light so shine before men," etc.

1. This secrecy is unnecessary for any good and lawful purpose. Let us carefully observe what secrecy is condemned and when. It is not denied that individuals, families and even societies may have secrets which they are not bound to disclose, but these are private or personal affairs with which the public has no concern. These,

however, are not private but public associations, claiming public patronage and approval, extending their influence through all the ramifications of the community in which they exist, whether it be a college or society at large; and yet secrecy instead of being the exception is the rule; it is not an incidental but an essential element of their organization.

Nor do we deny that even public bodies, legislative or judicial, whether in church or state, may have private or secret meetings, the proceedings of which it is necessary and therefore lawful and right for good and sufficient reasons to keep secret. But this is a very different thing from being organized on the principle of secrecy, and no more justifies the charge of being secret societies than does the fact, that many of the meetings and proceedings of these associations are public, free them from that charge. We affirm that the secrecy which so universally characterizes these orders is not necessary for any good or lawful purpose where they have the protection of law.

We admit that when the prosecution of that which is good and right exposes to oppression and persecution and there is no

protection from the law, then it may be necessary and proper to resort to secrecy for self-protection, as did the primitive Christians, the Covenanters of Scotland, and loyal leagues at the South during the rebellion. But when, as is the case at least in this country now, and as was true in the North during the war, every one can claim and enjoy the protection of law in the prosecution and accomplishment of every good and worthy object, there is absolutely no necessity for secrecy and it is therefore wrong. Truth and right under a free government never fear or need fear or shun the light; only that which is conscious of wrong doing seeks to hide itself in darkness. These individuals and societies which have objects in view that are condemned by law or public sentiment, such as the Ku-Klux Klan, the Jesuits, and others, are indeed under the necessity of resorting to secrecy. "He that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reprov'd; but he that doeth truth cometh to the light that his deeds may be manifest that they are wrought in God." So that the very resort to secrecy is in itself suspicious, and presumptive evidence of something wrong which will

not bear the light. What would be thought of a church or congregation of Christians organized on this principle? Would it not deservedly meet with universal suspicion and reprobation? Even when necessary, such secrecy is undesirable and fraught with many evils. We know how the secret meetings of the early Christians exposed them to undeserved, yet unavoidable obloquy and reproach, as being guilty of the most scandalous and horrible practices; and when the necessity no longer existed how promptly and joyfully they abandoned their secrecy and held their meetings in open day! An imperative necessity alone will justify such secrecy and only during the time such necessity exists. So that the plea that it is necessary to guard against imposition will not avail, seeing such necessity is not imperative, that is, there are other means of guarding against imposition which individuals and societies have employed and do employ with reasonable success without resorting to secrecy. Being therefore unnecessary for any good or lawful purpose:

2. It is *unwarrantable* for any one and especially for Christians. Christ has said: "Ye are the light of the world. No man

lighteth a candle and putteth it under a bushel or under a bed but on a candlestick and it giveth light to all that are in the house."

Now, there are but two alternatives conceivable, either those things that are kept secret are good and valuable, important to be known, or they are wrong and sinful, or at best trifling and unimportant. In either case secrecy is unwarrantable. If they are wrong, if it be "a shame even to speak of those things that are done of them in secret," as was the case with the secret societies in the Apostles' day, and as no doubt is the case with some of them in our own day, such as their indecent and disgusting ceremonies of initiation and also many "hidden things of darkness," which the great day alone will reveal, then there can be no question as to the Christian's duty not only to have no "fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness," but rather reprove them by exposing them to the light as many good men have done and are doing, and that too, even though they had promised or sworn to keep them secret. In reference to these the Christian should say: "Oh, my soul come not thou unto their secret; unto their assembly mine honor be not thou united." Even when

the secrets are harmless and trifling, while at the same time they pretend to introduce the initiated to the knowledge of great and profound mysteries and valuable and important truths, the obligation of secrecy is unwarrantable for a Christian because it makes him a party to a stupendous fraud, and being deceived himself becomes the occasion and means of deceiving and misleading others.

But even on the most charitable supposition, viz: that these secrets are what some pretend, important and valuable, worth all the money paid for them, still the Christian may not promise to keep secrets which may be of benefit and advantage to his fellow men, in the face of the express command of the Master: "What I tell you in darkness that speak ye in light, and what ye hear in the ear that preach ye on the house tops." "Let your light so shine before men," &c. No man or set of men, much less a Christian, has a right to monopolize for their own benefit anything the knowledge of which would be of advantage to their fellow men. Even in reference to inventions in the useful arts, while the inventor has a right to a reasonable compensation for the fruit of his inventive genius, yet he has no right to confine the

benefits to himself, nor after such reasonable compensation to deprive the public of the advantage of its knowledge by locking it up in a secret circle or combination. What would be thought of a teacher of science who should pledge all his scholars to secrecy as to the discoveries he had made and communicated to them? Indeed this is the great difference between the heathen and Christian civilization, as Wendell Phillips has well remarked in his lecture on the "Lost Arts." While among ancient heathen nations all knowledge or learning in religion, science and the arts, was confined by strict secrecy to select circles, or classes, and so became lost to the world, when their families or classes became extinct, it is the glory of our Christian civilization that what is known to any individual becomes common property to all, and cannot be lost to the world; and what has produced this difference? Simply the teaching of the Author of Christianity, obliging his disciples to be light-bearers to the world, shining as lights in the world, dispensing to all whatever good or blessing they have received. "Freely ye have received, freely give."

On any supposition, therefore, secrecy in a society which claims and deserves the

patronage and encouragement of Christians is unwarrantable, and so inconsistent with the genius and spirit of Christianity. But further—

(3) Such secrecy is *dangerous*. While it is unnecessary and unwarrantable for any good purpose and those whose designs are open and fair will not resort to it, yet we know that those whose designs are sinister and selfish, and who are unscrupulous in the use of means for carrying them out, do find it necessary to cover them up with the veil of secrecy. And this gives them a great advantage not only over the public at large, but also over the honest and unsuspecting members of the society or association to which they belong. On this account it is that political parties can be preserved from becoming corrupt and mighty engines for evil in the hands of scheming demagogues only by subjecting them and their actions to the fullest and most open scrutiny by the public press. On this account it was that the society called Jesuits became so dangerous wherever it was allowed to exist and has been repeatedly suppressed in several countries of Europe, because it became dangerous to the interest of society and the state. Even the church of God if it should adopt the principle of

secrecy would undoubtedly in a few years become corrupt and subject to the control of unscrupulous and designing men who could wield the influence of the whole body for the accomplishment of personal, selfish ends. As long as human nature remains as it is, any society, it matters not how good and laudable its object, nor how upright and sincere the intentions of its founders, if organized on the principle of secrecy, will necessarily fall into the hands and under the control of evil-minded, selfish men, who contrive, sooner or later, to obtain the monopoly of the highest offices and places of honor and power, and so are able to make use of the resources of the whole order for the accomplishment of their own selfish aims. This might be illustrated by the history of secret orders from the Jesuits down to the latest, and in some respects, most dangerous, the grange. The only security of liberty in the state, of truth and righteousness in the church, the only protection in any society which the many have against the tyranny, the dishonesty and oppression of the few, is by holding those entrusted with official power and influence to the strictest responsibility, requiring them to give frequent reports of themselves and

their conduct, to the many. But this cannot be done in these secret orders, where the inevitable tendency is to contract the widest circle into an ever-narrowing serpentine coil till it reaches the innermost, central ring or clique, called the highest degree, which dominates all others and is itself accountable to none. The only wonder is that the press of our day, which is so jealous or sensitive to the dangers arising from secret rings or combinations in church or state, is so indifferent to the threatening aspect of this growing and deepening cloud of secretism, which at first no larger than a man's hand, now darkens the whole political and moral heavens with its shadow. To us it seems like the fascination of some spell, which, like that of slavery, holds both church and state enchained, until the cloud bursts, as that did in this country, in storm and tempest on our heads. How is it possible that the ministers and members of the church of Christ, who are set as watchmen to give the alarm can without great guilt spare to cry aloud and lift up their voice of testimony like a trumpet against this great and growing evil, to show men their danger, much more lend the influence of their words and example by

membership in their orders, to encourage and increase the evil?

(4) The obligation of secrecy, whether by promise or oath, is ensnaring to the conscience, and so contrary to the express command of God: "Thou shalt swear,"—and the same principle applies to a promise—"in truth, in judgment and in righteousness." We are not now referring to the profane character of the oaths which some of these societies impose upon their members, and which will be considered in its place. The evil of the obligation of secrecy is the same whatever be the particular form of the obligation, whether by promise or oath. The Christian ought to be as circumspect in taking any obligation which binds his conscience as in taking an oath. Moreover, the obligation of an oath, if it is an unlawful one (as all these extrajudicial oaths are), is not a whit more binding or sacred than that of an unlawful promise. The addition of the oath is only an aggravation of the sin, involving as it does the guilt of profanity, without changing the principle or character of the obligation. This cannot be too frequently or plainly asserted, because the impression is general, that there is some kind of sacredness in the form of the oath administered,

which becomes the more binding, the more solemn and awful the appeals and imprecations with which it is offered. So that those who disregard their obligations even when convinced of their unlawfulness are considered guilty of perjury. This is a great mistake, as may clearly be seen in the case of Herod, who rashly promised with an oath that he would give to the daughter of Herodias whatever she might ask. Who will say that Herod was bound by such an oath any more than if it had been simply a rash promise? The sin was in taking, not in breaking it. To have disregarded it was his duty; while to keep it involved him in the additional crime of murder without in the least diminishing the original guilt of his conduct, which was the same whether he kept or broke his oath or promise. The sin was in making it, and to keep it after he found that it involved him in doing wrong was only to add to the sin, not only by murder, but also by showing that he had more regard to his own word, or a false sense of honor, than he had to the authority of God. This furnishes a sufficient answer to the common sneer against those who have seceded from these orders and revealed their secrets, that

they are dishonored and unworthy of belief, because either they say what is false, or are guilty of perjury in revealing what they have sworn to keep. It is not so. On the contrary, those who continue to regard the obligation of secrecy as binding, after they are convinced that it was unlawfully assumed in the first place, are the guilty parties in God's sight, because, like Herod, they pay more respect to their own word, or rather their false notion of honor, than they do to the honor and authority of God's law. It is the keeping, not the breaking of an unlawful oath, or promise, which is sinful in God's sight. Why? Because the taking of it in the first place was the sin, and every moment of continuing it after the sinfulness of it is seen is just a constant repetition of that sin.

Thus the obligation of secrecy, or to obey a code of unknown laws, is ensnaring to the conscience whatever be the form of the obligation, whether by promise or oath, because the Christian is placing himself in a position where for aught he knows, he may be under the necessity of committing sin, either by doing that which he feels to be wrong in order to keep his word, or by violating his word or oath in order to avoid

doing it, and no man has a right voluntarily to place himself in a position where he must choose between two moral evils. If such an obligation were attempted to be imposed upon us even by lawful authority, whether civil or ecclesiastical, we should resist it to the utmost of our power as an infringement on our rights of conscience which God has left free from the doctrines and commandments of men. How much more inexcusable is it for any of Christ's people thus voluntarily to surrender the liberty they have in the Gospel, and without any constraint put their necks under this most grievous of all yokes of bondage.

But it may be said that every candidate before joining these orders is assured that his obligation will not conflict with his duty to his God, himself or his fellow men, and that we have the testimony of many good men that they have found this to be true. It is sufficient to reply to this that we have testimony of many men equally good, that they have found that the obligation does conflict with their duties, as Christians, and accordingly have thrown it off; and so the one testimony will offset, and more than offset the other—just as one positive will more than outweigh a hundred

negatives. But even were it otherwise, were there no such conflicting testimony, yet the assurance of any man or number of men, unless they are infallible, cannot justify another in surrendering his own right of private judgment. "Every one must give account of *himself* to God," and no one who is capable of judging for himself has a right to surrender his conscience any more than his understanding and his will to that of another, unless that other be infallible. Indeed this is the very essence of popery, which subjects the consciences of private members to the priests and of the whole church to the Pope. But as Protestants, we claim that each individual has a right, and is *bound* to judge for himself as to what is right and what is wrong according to the only infallible standard—the word of God. The injunction, "Prove all things," is addressed to every individual, and no one can comply with it without having submitted what he is called to receive and obey, to the test of God's word. In this matter we cannot, we dare not, rest our faith on the judgment, or say so of any man or set of men. They may assist us in arriving at a correct judgment as to whether any given action or thing is in

accordance with the Divine will. But we repeat, no one who is capable of judging for himself can, without entangling his conscience or surrendering his liberty, accept and act upon the simple assurance of another as to what is right or wrong in any given case, unless he know beforehand and have an opportunity of judging for himself; so that any promise of secrecy, or obedience to a code of unknown laws is utterly inconsistent with the genius and spirit of Christianity, and no Christian who has any regard to the purity and liberty of his conscience can lawfully assume such obligation.

Thus we have shown that the secrecy that belongs to all these associations is—

(1.) Unnecessary for any good purpose:
(2.) Unwarrantable, incompatible with the character and position of Christ's followers as lights in the world: (3.) Dangerous to the interests of society and the purity of the church; and (4,) Ensnaring to the conscience, and so incompatible with each one's personal responsibility to God.

III. ANTI-CHRISTIAN AND PROFANE.

What we have hitherto said applies to all associations or fraternities which impose

on their members a promise or oath of secrecy or an obligation to obey a code of unknown laws. The objection we come now to notice, applies with particular force to such societies as the Masonic fraternity which, however, is the mother and model of all of them. While some of them may not be liable to all the objections which we present under this head, yet inasmuch as they imitate many of its anti-Christian rites and ceremonies, they are so far conformed to their model, partake of its characteristics, and must share in its condemnation. Therefore, we say that these associations are inconsistent with the genius and spirit of Christianity, and church members ought not to have fellowship with them.

6th. *Because the religion they profess to practice is anti-Christian, and many of their rites and ceremonies are shockingly profane.*

That these societies have a religion is susceptible of demonstration, and is even admitted and exultingly claimed by their own writers and advocates. They have their religious rituals for different occasions, such as funerals, dedications, &c.,—call their buildings temples, that is, places of worship; they have their hymns, prayers, altars, priests, some of them even

sacraments, and profess to prepare their members for the lodge above, meaning heaven. Now what is this religion? It must be either Christian or anti-Christian; it cannot be neutral or indifferent. That it is not Christian is evident, because the very name of Christ and everything distinctively Christian is studiously and of set purpose excluded from its authorized services. We say *authorized services*, because whatever may be the practice of particular individuals or lodges, different from what is prescribed in their manuals, whether written or oral, can no more be ascribed to the order, than the crime committed by individuals or lodges without the approval or sanction of the society can justly be charged to that society. Now, what is the religion taught in their manuals, and prescribed by the authority of these orders as such? We answer, simply bald deism. The God they worship, the Supreme Being whom they recognize is no more the Christian's God, the Triune Jehovah, than he is the God of the Jews, Mohammedans, or pagans. He is an imaginary being in whose worship Jews, Mohammedans, infidels and pagans, those of the most opposite opinions and beliefs, all except Christians, can consistently unite. Indeed it is their pride and

boast that in their temples and at their altars there is the utmost liberality, where all except Christians, can meet on a common level. They say, "except Christians," because they leave out their peculiarities as Christians, and so cease, for the time to be Christians while officiating or participating in these Christless ceremonies where there is no mention of the name of Christ, no recognition of sin, of atonement, or reconciliation by blood, nothing but a kind of heathen morality and worldly benevolence which their members are taught to believe will commend them to God and procure them admission to heaven or the lodge above. Thus, in the language of the prophet Ezekiel, 43: 8 verse: "In their setting of their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts, and their wall between me and them, they have even defiled my holy name by their abominations." If, as is claimed in some of their degrees, there is anything introduced peculiar to Christianity, it is only by way of imitation or caricature, producing a kind of mongrel mixture of paganism, Judaism, and spurious Christianity, which like the religion of the colonists of Samaria is even worse than pure deism. This compromising of truth

with error, of Christ with Belial, of the temple of God with idols, is the worst form of anti-Christ, and renders the religion of these societies near akin to popery, if indeed it is not even worse. How any minister, or member of the church of Jesus Christ can lend his countenance or encouragement to such a religion, even by his presence, much more by officiating, or taking part in such ceremonies, miscalled religion, so dishonoring to his Master and directly opposed to the very primary and fundamental principles of our holy religion, *is, and must forever remain a most inexplicable mystery!*

We have said that many of their rites and ceremonies are shockingly profane.

1. They profess the name of God by ascribing those titles to their officers which belong peculiarly to God and Christ, such as Most Excellent High Priest, Most Pui-sant Potentate, &c.

(2.) They profane the solemn ordinance of the oath, which is only properly observed when administered first by lawful authority, second on a lawful occasion, and thirdly for a lawful purpose, not one of which essential conditions can be found in the oaths which these societies presume to administer,

as might be easily shown if space permitted.

(3.) They profane the Bible by perverting its meaning, and using the Book for purposes for which it was never intended. The employment of it as a symbol of Masonry, as an instrument to swear by, and carrying it in processions along with the sword of the civil magistrate can only be regarded as a superstitious, unwarranted and so profane use of that holy book. Their extracts and quotation from it in their lectures and elsewhere, are often garbled, mutilated, and most grossly perverted and profaned by leaving out the name of Jesus Christ wherever it occurs, and applying what has sole reference to him and his church, to their own orders. This can be easily verified by an examination of any of their authorized manuals.

Finally: The most sacred symbols of the Divine presence and divine worship are employed in such a way as can only be regarded as idolatrous and profane. Thus we find among the furniture of some of their lodges the ark of the covenant, the breastplate of judgment, Aaron's rod that budded, the brazen serpent, the white stone, the altar of incense, and many others, which, where it was lawful to use them,

were to be handled with the utmost reverence, and the imitation of which was forbidden under the most dreadful penalties; and yet which are now by these societies imitated, caricatured, and used for purposes for which they were never intended, with a blasphemy and profanity that is absolutely appalling. These things are done in their public processions, funerals, dedications and celebrations of various kinds, in the light of day, and in the face of the sun. Alas! that we should have to say it; with the silent consent or the active co-operation and unblushing approval of those bearing the name of Christians and even Christian ministers!!! And if these things are done in the green tree what may we suppose is done in the dry—in their secret conclaves, in their chambers of imagery where like those seen by the prophet Ezekiel, as recorded in the 8th chapter of his prophecy, they are found worshiping toward the east with their backs to the temple of God; *i. e.*, worshiping the sun, and where, as we are gravely informed by some of their writers the worship of Tammuz and the Greek Adonis is revived under the name of Hiram Abiff! If a heathen temple were erected in our midst, alongside of our churches,

with its sacrifices and ceremonies of idolatrous worship, it would excite such horror and indignation in a Christian community as would loudly clamor for its removal or destruction. But we have among us all over this Christian land, close beside our churches, built at vast expense, temples rivaling in splendor that of Solomon, where a worship is maintained as truly and really idolatrous as that of ancient Greece or Rome; and yet the churches of God are either indifferent spectators or active abettors! "Tell it not in Gath!" Is it any wonder that some of us feel, like Paul at Athens, our spirit stirred within us, to cry out with voice and pen against this great, growing idolatry, and especially to say to Christians, "Come out from among them and be ye separate and touch not the unclean thing." "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? or what communion hath light with darkness; and what concord hath Christ with Belial; or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel; or what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?"

Considering, therefore, the principles of selfishness which characterize all their organizations, their secrecy, and their anti-Christian and profane character are we not warranted in saying that they “are inconsistent with the genius and spirit of Christianity and church members ought not to have fellowship with them.”



UNITED PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION,
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An Authorized Psalmody.

J. G. Carson D.D.

The position of the United Presbyterian Church is contained in the following declaration of the Testimony :

DECLARATION.

“We declare that it is the will of God that the songs contained in the Book of Psalms be sung in his worship, both public and private, to the end of the world ; and in singing God’s praise these songs should be employed to the exclusion of the devotional compositions of uninspired men.”

This declaration contains a statement of truth and an inference from it. It is the positive declaration which contains the principle—the inference is the application of that principle to a particular instance, without, however, excluding other instances to which

it is equally applicable, as to imitation of the Psalms, paraphrases, versifications of other parts of Scripture, &c. Indeed, if the inference is made co-extensive with the statement of the principle, as it might be, and as it logically should be, it would read thus: "And in singing God's praise, these songs should be employed to the exclusion of all others which have not the same or equal authority for their use."

The position, therefore, which we occupy and are called upon to maintain, as stated in this declaration, is the exclusive use of an authorized Psalmody—not simply or even primarily an inspired as distinguished from an uninspired Psalmody, for even what is inspired may not be authorized—nor yet a Scripture as distinguished from Scriptural Psalmody (as some put it;) for we maintain *that* to be the only *Scriptural* Psalmody which is warranted by the authority of the Scriptures; and what does not possess this quality is not Scriptural even, though it be Scripture itself. The key to the whole position is contained in the words, "It is the

will of God," recognizing this as the sole and sufficient reason for the use of the Book of Psalms, and the consequent exclusion of all others as not possessing the Scriptural warrant. The position as thus defined and separated from all side issues with which it is frequently confounded, is easily understood and is capable of being clearly demonstrated. We are confined to the simple question, What is the will of God? and to this question a distinct and satisfactory answer can be given. To the question, What is most agreeable to men's taste and feelings? or even What is most profitable to inspire devotional frames and promote the growth of religion in the soul? no answer can be given which would prove universally satisfactory, nor even permanently satisfactory to any, because men's tastes and feelings, as well as their experience, differ so widely in different individuals, and even in the same individual at different times. Hence the multiplication and continual changing of hymnologies. But to the question, what is acceptable to God—what is his will? One answer, and one only

can be given. What saith the Word? How readest thou? From this question all considerations of men's tastes and experience, or the respective merits of Psalms and hymns as determined by this standard, are utterly excluded, and we are confined to the single point, What has God appointed or authorized?

Nor is the question here respecting different versions, their comparative excellencies or defects; for until it is decided what is to be used in the praise of God, what is to be versified, there is no common ground on which the question of versions can be considered and settled; and when the former is determined there will be little difficulty in agreeing on the latter. Just as it is in regard to the Bible itself—let the inspiration and divine authority of its various books be established and admitted, and the question of translations—their comparative merits—will settle itself.

The question, therefore, between Psalm-singers and hymn-singers is not which have

the best version of that which is equally acceptable to God, but a far deeper and more important one—one in which every church, and indeed every worshiper, is equally interested; not as between them and other individuals or churches, but between them and their God—what is acceptable to him in the matter of praise as an ordinance of worship. In other words, it is a matter of principle, and not mere expediency; duty, and not mere preference. When the churches come to consider and treat it on this ground, a long step will be taken toward the healing of these divisions which have been caused by the neglect or refusal to so consider it.

That, therefore, which we are required to establish as an affirmative proposition is this, and this only: "That the songs contained in the Book of Psalms are given and appointed by God to constitute the matter of praise in the worship of his church, both public and private, to the end of the world." If any others are offered or employed, whether inspired or uninspired, it rests on those who thus offer or employ them to show the same or equal

authority for their use, else they are excluded. In other words, it requires positive divine authority to warrant their introduction, but not their exclusion.

With all due deference to the honored fathers and brethren who have done so, I humbly submit that it is not proper or legitimate, to speak of the exclusion of other parts of Scripture as an *attainment* which the church has not made. Their *introduction* would properly be an attainment, for it would argue that some authority and warrant for their use had been found in the word of God. But until this is done, they are excluded *ipso facto*, according to the position which we, as a church, have always occupied; and this has been the practical, because it is the logical, result of that position.

It is proposed now to establish the position thus defined by a single argument in the form of a syllogism, to which I think all the arguments commonly urged may be reduced, and which answers all contrary arguments and objections, viz. :

Major premise—That only is to be used in the formal worship of God which he hath appointed for that purpose.

Minor premise—The songs contained in the Book of Psalms, and they only, have been given and appointed by God to be used in his worship in the ordinance of praise.

Ergo—The songs contained, &c., and they only, are to be used in the formal worship of God in the ordinance of praise.

In regard to the first premise, the very statement of it appears almost like an axiom, the truth of which no Protestant, at least, would deny or gainsay, for it is the very principle underlying the Reformation from Popery, viz., the Word of God is the infallible, all-sufficient and only rule of faith and duty in all matters affecting the doctrine, order and worship of the Church of God. It is, moreover, the only principle on which the pretensions of Ritualism or High Churchism on the one hand, and of Rationalism or Broad Churchism on the other hand, can be successfully met and refuted. Neither the authority of Pope or councils, the dogmas

of the church or of individuals, the dictates of reason or expediency—nothing but the authority of God in his Word, can bind the conscience or prescribe what is to be believed or practiced in his worship.

True, there are many things connected with the due observance of divine ordinances, or the carrying out of divine prescriptions, which are left to be regulated by the exercise of a sound reason and discretion, subject to this general rule, “Let all things be done decently and in order.” But these are only such things as are clearly and necessarily implied in the divine command or prescription itself. Thus the command to “sing Psalms,” requires that they should be translated into such a form that they can be sung, and accompanied with appropriate music; but the kind of metres and the particular tunes are determined by sound judgment and good taste. This admission, however, is neither an infringement on nor a limitation of the principle we have stated; for, as we have said, these things are implied in the command itself, just as “Search the Scriptures”

requires and authorizes, by implication, translations into the vulgar tongue, of the style and faithfulness of which reason must be the judge.

I have said that the very statement of the principle contained in the major premise ought to commend itself to the ready acceptance of every Protestant mind, and for our present purpose we have to do with no other. And yet, it is on this very point that the whole issue of the question of Psalmody turns; for all, or nearly all, are willing to admit that the Book of Psalms was given to be sung in the praise of God, and that they are designed and adapted for use in the church to the end of the world. It is their exclusive use which is denied, or, rather, liberty is claimed in regard to their use and the use of any other Scriptural songs. Indeed, this is the main, I might say the only, plea which is urged with any degree of seriousness in favor of hymn singing—the plea of Christian liberty. It becomes necessary to show that this is not a matter of Christian liberty. If

this is done, then the whole question is decided so far as the great majority of our opponents are concerned, and their own admission that the Psalms were given and appointed to be sung in the worship of God through all time, can be turned against them with conclusive effect.

Now, this is done by showing that the singing of Psalms or hymns in the worship of God is a matter of obligation as a duty, and not of indifference or liberty; determined and imposed by divine authority, and not by the opinions or commandments of men. Liberty can only be claimed where there is no obligation of divine authority—it is freedom from the obligation of rites and ceremonies imposed by human authority, or the obligation of which has been repealed or abrogated. It certainly cannot be urged in reference to divine commands, implicit regard to which is not only the highest duty, but at the same time the utmost liberty.

The putting in of this plea is, therefore, simply a begging of the question. It proceeds on the assumption that what we sing

in the praise of God, or whether we sing at all, is left to be decided by everyone's judgment or feeling—in other words, is a matter of indifference, like the eating of meats or the observing of days. But the truth is, that it is not only right but the duty of all who can, to sing God's praise. If it is right to sing Psalms, it is a duty to do so. If it is right to sing hymns, it is the duty of all to do so when opportunity offers. The whole question, is one of duty and not of privilege; to be determined not by our own will and pleasure, but by the will of God as made known in his Word, which, being ascertained, leaves no room for liberty at all.

Having thus cleared the subject of all irrelevant questions and side issues, we are prepared to consider the principle laid down in our major premise—the arguments which may be adduced in its favor.

And *first*, we argue that nothing is to be employed in the formal worship of God but that which he hath appointed for that purpose, because,

Obedience to the will of God belongs to the

essence of all acceptable worship. “In vain,” says God, *Matt.* 15: 9, “do ye worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” Such worship is will-worship. For, what is true worship? It is that religious homage, reverence and honor which is due to God from his creatures, or in other words, expressed subjection to his will. It consists not only in doing what he has commanded, but doing it because he has commanded it, and therefore must be done when, where, and in the manner he has commanded. It will not avail to say, that he has nowhere forbidden it, or that the thing itself seems to us good and proper to be done. Saul could have urged all this in reference to his conduct in sparing Agag and the best of the cattle of the Amalekites, and in offering sacrifices in the absence of Samuel. But the stern rebuke of the prophet (*1 Sam.* 15: 22), “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, &c.,” utterly demolishes his plea, tears off his flimsy pretenses of respect to the honor of

God, and leaves his conduct naked and inexcusable rebellion instead of worship—a setting up of his own will, if not in opposition to, at least in place of the will of God.

If therefore the object of worship be primarily to please God, and not ourselves, and if implicit obedience to his will be more pleasing to him than the most costly sacrifices which he hath not prescribed, then surely the presentation of those songs to him in praise which he himself hath given and appointed for that purpose, must be more pleasing to him than any others, even though in our estimation they may be more excellent and pleasing, but which he has not prescribed. The former is true worship, for it is obedience to the will of God, doing not only what he commands, but because he commands it. The latter is will-worship—following our own will and pleasure instead of God's; and, however sincere may be our professed intentions to honor and glorify him, we are constantly reminded of the fact that in God's esteem "to obey is better than sacrifice," and to the challenge "who hath required

this at your hands ? ” we must be dumb and speechless.

That nothing should be used in the formal worship of God but that which he himself hath prescribed and appointed for that purpose we argue—

2. *Because God claims it as his prerogative to prescribe the way and means of his worship, and is extremely jealous of this prerogative.* This we might show *a priori*. It belongs to the Creator, the object of worship, to prescribe ; it belongs to his creatures, as worshipers, humbly and reverently to attend and learn and receive whatever he prescribes. Thus, in the plan of salvation, it belongs to God, the Judge and Law-giver, who is offended, to prescribe the terms of reconciliation, the way by which sinners may be restored to his favor and enjoy his fellowship. *Micah* 6: 8—“ He hath showed thee, O man what is the good ” (way). It belongs to sinners, instead of striving to invent and devise a plan of their own for answering the question, “ Wherewith shall I come before the Lord ? ” simply to hear and

accept the good way which God hath devised and proposed in the gospel. And nothing can be more dishonoring to him, no matter on what pretext, than for any one to set aside his righteousness, as the Jews did, and to go about to establish a righteousness of their own their own way. The same principle applies to the means of worship. God only knows and can tell how he is to be acceptably worshiped. And especially is this true in the matter of praise, where the main object is to set forth and magnify the divine excellencies as displayed in God's character and works. Who but God can tell what is suitable and worthy of himself? "Who can by searching find out God?" From the very nature and necessity of the case, therefore, we are led to the conclusion that it belongs to God to prescribe the way and manner in which he is to be worshiped.

But this is not all. There is nothing more clearly revealed in the Scriptures, or more frequently asserted both in the Old and New Testaments, than this claim of God's *exclusive* prerogative to institute and appoint the forms

of his worship. It is implied in the second precept of the decalogue, which “requires the receiving, observing and keeping *pure and entire* all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in his word,” and which forbids “the worshiping of God by images, or *any other way not appointed* in his word.” So when the tabernacle was to be built; “See,” saith he to Moses, “that thou make all things according to the pattern shown thee in the mount.” The whole ritual of sacrifice and ceremony, to its minutest detail, both in the tabernacle and the temple, was prescribed by divine authority; and any departure from this order was regarded by him as an infringement on his prerogative, and was visited with the tokens of his severest displeasure. Thus, when Nadab and Abihu presumed to offer strange fire—that is fire not taken from the altar of burnt-offering—it is said, “A fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them.”—*Lev.* 10: 1–8. Surely it might be asked, wherein had they sinned so grievously? Is not one fire as good as another? But God did not

so regard it. He looked upon and treated it as contempt of his authority, an unwarranted invasion of his prerogative. And in this incident he whose name is Jealous, and who is a jealous God, has written over the door of his house, as in letters of fire, this fearful inscription, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified."

And so throughout the Bible God has declared his extreme jealousy of this prerogative, and has once and again appended his solemn protest against either adding to or taking from his commandments and ordinances. Thus, in the organization of the Old Testament Church, after having given to Moses all the directions respecting the regulation of his worship, he adds (*Deut. 12: 32*), "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it; thou shalt not add thereto or diminish from it." And no less careful is he to guard the sacredness of this prerogative in the New Testament Church; for, besides our Lord's expressed abhorrence of the traditions of the Pharisees, whereby they made

void the law of God by superseding or setting aside its authority, we find at the close of the sacred canon the same warning inscription over the portal of the New as over that of the Old Testament Church (*Rev.* 22: 18, 19): "If any man shall add," &c. The great King and Head of the Church, whose prerogative it is, has given a perfect and complete rule of faith and worship, and therefore the addition of anything to that worship which he has not either expressly or impliedly appointed, on pretense of custom, usage, expediency, or any other plea, or, on the other hand, the taking away by setting aside or habitual disuse and neglect of what he has herein prescribed, is equally a daring invasion of the divine prerogative, a reflection on the perfection of divine wisdom, and so cannot but be offensive to him who hath said (*Isaiah* 42: 8), "My glory will I not give to another."

3. *This positive divine authority and appointment is necessary as the warrant and foundation of a divine faith on the part of the worshiper.* "Without faith," it is said (*Heb.* 11: 6), "it is impossible to please God," and (*Rom.* 14: 23), "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Now, one essential element of this faith, which is so necessary to acceptance with God in every act of worship.

is the persuasion or assurance of a divine warrant for what we are doing ; and this can only rest on a divine institution or appointment. Thus, under the law it was necessary, not only that the offering be perfect of its kind, but that it be the very kind which God had prescribed. While therefore, the worshiper who brought the two turtle-doves or young pigeons could come with the same faith of acceptance as his richer brother who brought a kid or an ox, yet he who brought the most valuable and costly sacrifices of something which was not prescribed could have no such confidence. Now, praise is one of the sacrifices we are to offer in the worship of God under the New Testament (*Heb. 13 : 16*). When, therefore we bring a Psalm, or a hymn to offer unto God, the very first requisite to acceptance is a divine warrant on which faith can rest and say, " We bring to thee that which thou hast required and appointed." And for this nothing less and nothing else will serve than a *positive* divine appointment, either by express Scripture precept or example, or good and necessary inference from Scripture. Faith is a positive, not a negative exercise, and requires a positive, not a negative authority. It will not satisfy such a faith to say that the thing is not forbidden,

because to the conscience of the believer the very absence of a divine appointment operates as a prohibition. And therefore, unless we are prepared to accept the dogma of Popery—that the authority of the church as expressed through Pope or council is infallible, and so a sufficient foundation for the faith and obedience of its members (which it is taken for granted no Protestant will for a moment admit, much less claim,) we are led irresistibly to the conclusion from this, as well as the two preceding arguments, that nothing is to be used in the worship of God but that which he himself hath instituted and appointed for that purpose, which is our major premise.

And now we have a right to demand, and we are bound to demand, in reference to any songs, whether inspired or uninspired, which are offered to be employed in the praise of God, “By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee this authority?” and to reject whatever cannot furnish the divine credentials, however highly recommended otherwise. We are now prepared to inquire what songs, if any, have this divine authorization, which brings us to the consideration of the second premise, viz:

Minor Premise—*The songs* contained in

the Book of Psalms, and they only, have been given and appointed by God to be used in his praise.

It is assumed, or taken for granted, in this argument, that praise is an ordinance of divine worship, and that this duty is to be performed by the *singing* of Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. It is also admitted and recognized as a necessity by all churches, that a form must be prepared beforehand, in which all can join. However they may differ in regard to a Book of Prayer, yet all are agreed in regard to the necessity of a Book of Praise or Hymn-book. The only question to be settled is, how shall that book be furnished? Has God provided and furnished such a book, or has he left each church or each age of the church to furnish one for itself? We affirm that God has provided and given the Book of Psalms to be used by his church in all ages to the end of time, and argue:

1. From the form of these Psalms and the title of the book, which show that it was given for this purpose. We need not stop to prove that this book of Psalms is inspired that is given by God to his church; its place in the sacred canon is sufficient evidence of this. True, language has sometimes been

used respecting some of these Psalms inconsistent with that reverence which is due to the words of the Holy Ghost—the word of God. But such objections coming from evangelical Christians must either be covered with the mantle of that of charity which “hopeth all things,” or treated as we would any other infidel objections, with which we have nothing to do in this discussion. If these Psalms, or any of them, are not the inspired word of God, let them be stricken from the sacred canon; if they are inspired, let them be treated, not as the words of David, or any other mere man, but as the words which the Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of these men. The only question with which we have to do is the purpose for which they were given. In reference to this, we affirm that they, in common with all Scripture, are “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness,” etc. Yet their lyrical form and their titles—Psalms, hymns and songs—together with the title of the book, “Sephir Tehillim”—book of praises—sufficiently indicate their specific design to be sung, and sung in the praise of God. Indeed, this is admitted by all commentators of any standing. Among the many which might be quoted, we have

space only for the testimony of the late Dr. Addison Alexander, in the preface to his Commentary on the Book of Psalms, vol. I, page 7: "These hundred and fifty independent pieces, different as they are, have this in common, that they are all—

1. Poetical; not merely imaginative and expressive of feeling, but stamped externally with that peculiar character of parallelism which distinguishes the higher style of Hebrew composition from ordinary prose. A still more marked resemblance is that they are all not only poetical, but—

2. Lyrical, *i. e.*, songs, poems, intended to be *sung*, and with a musical accompaniment.

3. They are all *religious lyrics*, even those which seem at first sight the most secular in theme and spirit, but which are all found, on inquiry, to be strongly expressive of religious feeling.

4. They are all *ecclesiastical lyrics*, Psalms or hymns, *intended to be permanently used in public worship*, not excepting those which bear the clearest impress of original connection with the social, domestic, or personal relations and experience of the writers." This testimony, with which all other commentators agree, is conclusive, and will not be gainsayed. These Psalms, and

all of them, were given, in the words of Barnes, "to be sung, not read," and "intended to be permanently used in public worship." But—

2. We argue the same from the history of their use with divine approval in the Old Testament Church. This appears not only from the inscriptions directed to the chief musician, showing that they were composed not for private but for general use, but also from the express testimony of the sacred history contained in the books of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah and Israel. We shall only refer to the passages without quoting them at length—I. *Chron.* 16 : 7 ; II. *Chron.* 29 : 25–30. From these and others which might be quoted we are warranted to infer that this was the original design of God in giving them, and that they were so regarded and treated by the church of that day down to the time of the captivity. After that they were collected into a book and placed in the sacred canon by the same authority as the other books of the Old Testament—whether by the hands of Ezra, which is most probable, or of some other person unknown, matters not to the argument. Besides the testimony of the Jews, particularly in the Septuagint translation, we have the conclusive testimony of the

Saviour and his apostles that they continued to be received and used as a book of praises down to their day.

But were these the only ones that were given for this purpose? We answer, yes. Because—1. No mention is made of any others having been used in the regular and permanent worship of God; and 2. Whatever others were used *occasionally* even in the worship of God, as the song of Habakkuk, were not designed for general use, else they would have been put into this divine collection.

We are, therefore, warranted in the conclusion that the songs contained in the Book of Psalms, and they only, were given and appointed by God to be used in his worship in the Old Testament Church. It remains only to show the authority for their use in the New Testament Church, and this we argue—

1. From their adaptation for use under the New Testament, as well as or even better than under the Old. They are moral, not typical; spiritual, not carnal; evangelical, full of Christ and his gospel, and highly devotional. The truth is, that if they were adapted for use under the Old Testament, they are much more suitable now; for much

of the language employed in them respecting Christ and his kingdom must have conveyed but a dim and shadowy meaning to Old Testament saints. But in the clearer light of the New Testament these shadows disappear, and the rich, golden truths contained in these Psalms shine forth with a beauty and splendor which delight the eye and ravish the heart of every enlightened student and lover of God's word. We might fill pages with the glowing eulogies pronounced by poets, scholars and divines, indeed by all who have written on the Psalms, who can find no language sufficiently strong to express their admiration of their beauties and excellencies, not simply as compositions, but as lyrics adapted to all the purposes of praise, whether in showing forth the divine glory and perfections as manifested in the works of creation, providence and redemption, or in giving expression to every variety of devotional feeling which corresponds to the utmost range of Christian experience, in the church and individual, down to the latest ages. The more they are known, and the better they are understood, the more highly they are appreciated, and "the more transcendent," in the words of Milton, "does their

superiority appear over all other lyrical compositions whatsoever." If their use is not continued in the New Testament Church it certainly is not for want of suitableness and adaptation. Why they are not used, why they are superseded by compositions confessedly so far inferior, even by those who thus eulogize their superiority, is a mystery which remains, and must remain, unexplained. But—

2. Their divine appointment has neither terminated nor been abrogated or set aside under the New Testament. Though used in connection with instruments and sacrifices in the temple service, yet all are agreed that the singing of Psalms belongs to the moral worship of God, the obligation of which did not cease with the coming of Christ and the destruction of the temple, as did the use of instruments and the offering of sacrifices, which needed no re-enactment, but, unless expressly abrogated by divine authority, passed over into the New Testament Church by virtue of their original appointment. At all events, whatever difference of views there may be in regard to the use of instruments, yet the duty of *singing* in the worship of God is universally recognized and practiced by the Church to this day. The only question to be settled

is, What is to be sung? Has the divine appointment of the Book of Psalms as the matter of the Church's praise terminated—been abrogated or superseded by the appointment of others?

We have already seen that it has not terminated, because these Psalms are neither typical, ceremonial nor symbolical, but being moral and spiritual, are even better adapted to the present than to the former dispensation. Indeed this is now generally admitted, and has been from the first, by the use of them in the Church from the earliest ages, and more especially since the Reformation. We might have said, their exclusive use by the purest Reformed Churches down to a comparatively recent period; but this is not necessary to our argument, as we only wish to show that their continued obligation, or at least the propriety of their use, has been universally admitted even by those Churches which have practically set them aside, and this admission brings them under the operation of our first premise which excludes all others that have not equal authority for their use. But in addition to this we affirm that their appointment, instead of being abrogated, has been endorsed and repeated by our Saviour and his apostles, both by example and

precept. That the hymn or Psalm which was sung by the Lord and his disciples before going to the Mount of Olives, on that memorable night when he instituted the Lord's Supper, was one or more of these songs (Ps. 113-118) there can be no reasonable doubt, and this is almost universally admitted by commentators. Equally plain and clear is it that the direction given by Paul to the Ephesians and Colossians to "sing Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," apply, at least in part, to the Book of Psalms. We do not now raise the question in regard to the hymns and spiritual songs there mentioned, we shall notice that again; but all are agreed that by Psalms are meant those contained in the Book of Psalms. Here then we have express authority in the New Testament by example and precept for the continued use of the Book of Psalms in the worship of God. Whatever else is denied, there is, there can be no doubt that we have a divine warrant and authority for singing the Psalms, and all of them, in the worship of God, now as well as under the Old Testament. In the words of our Declaration, "It is the will of God that the songs," &c.

If this be so, then those who sing these Psalms are using this book in obedience to

the command of God, and for the very purpose for which it was confessedly given—"to be sung, not read." Those who refuse or neglect to do so are chargeable with disregarding a plain command of God to *sing* Psalms. Whether they are right or wrong in singing hymns, they are clearly and confessedly wrong in habitually omitting to use the Psalms; for when the command of God is interposed there is no room for liberty. Omission or neglect of performance is as truly disobedience as positive transgression.

Here we might safely rest the argument. We have shown the authority and warrant for the use of the Book of Psalms in the praise of God, both in the Old and New Testaments. If authority is claimed for using any other, we have a right—nay, we are bound—to demand that it be shown by positive appointment of God, either expressed or implied; and until this is done such songs, whether inspired or uninspired, are excluded from the formal worship of God on the principle laid down and established in the major premise. Here the burden of proof rests on those who introduce something beside or in addition to what we have proved to be given by Divine appointment; and we are safe in

affirming that such proof has not and can not be furnished. But waiving this for the present, we shall endeavor to demonstrate the negative of our proposition, viz., *that no others have been given or authorized* under the New Testament. Our argument may be stated thus :

Major Premise—If any such songs have been given for use in the New Testament Church, they must have been furnished either by our Saviour and his inspired apostles or by some one specially commissioned and inspired for this purpose.

Minor Premise—No such songs have been thus furnished.

Ergo—No other songs than those already given have divine authority for their use.

In support of the first position we offer the following :

1. *Nothing less than supernatural inspiration is requisite to furnish songs of praise for the Church of God.* We have hitherto laid little stress on the inspiration of the Psalms, because, as stated in the outset, the question is not, primarily nor principally, one of inspired or uninspired, but of an authorized or unauthorized Psalmody. But at this point the fact of inspiration becomes a conclusive argument in favor of the Book of

Psalms as against all compositions of uninspired men, because such inspiration is indispensably requisite to the making of songs of praise, *both from the nature of the case and from the fact that God has seen proper to give such an inspired book.* We affirm:

I. That supernatural inspiration is indispensably requisite *from the very nature of the case.* It has already been observed that a liturgy or form of praise is a necessity felt and acknowledged by all; for, unlike prayer, it is an exercise in which all unite in singing the same songs. And these songs must be prepared beforehand and adapted to the vast multitudes of worshipers in the different places and ages of the church, with all their diversified circumstances and wants as churches and individuals. While, therefore, it might be *possible* for one in ten thousand to compose hymns for their own use (though even this is not admitted,) who but God, or one inspired by God, can furnish hymns for the Church? Let it be borne in mind that the main object of praise is to declare and magnify the excellencies of the divine character, as well as to give expression to every variety of devotional feeling which the contemplation of these perfections is designed to quicken and call forth. Such a task requires a

perfection of knowledge of God and humanity which is beyond the natural capacity of the highest angel, much more of such ignorant, fallible men as the best of God's saints are even when enlightened by the word and ordinary influence of the Spirit of God—as much beyond their ability as the writing of one of the epistles or other books of the Bible would be. “What man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God”—because the Spirit, and he only, “searcheth all things, even the deep things of God.” Now, in the Book of Psalms we have a collection of songs which has stood the test of ages and centuries, which Christians all over the world and in all ages have found from comfortable experience to be admirably adapted to all the ends for which such a book is needed—a collection complete as a whole and perfect in all its parts, without a mistake or error in doctrine or sentiment, without a defect in style or expression—and why? Because it is the work, not of David or Asaph, of John or of Paul, but of the omniscient, all-wise, infinitely perfect Spirit of God himself, who alone knoweth the things of God and the things of man, and so how

to praise the one and express the feelings of the other. If space permitted, we could show, what any one can ascertain for himself by an examination of this matchless book, how in these one hundred and fifty Psalms is comprised all that is elsewhere revealed—of the character and perfections of God, in the relation of the three persons of the Godhead to each other, in his relations to man in the works of creation, providence and redemption; everything respecting the person and work of Christ, his life, death, resurrection, ascension, his kingdom and glory, his second coming and the final judgment; all that relates to the work of the Spirit in the application of redemption, and all that relates to the experience of men as sinners saved by grace; in a word, an epitome of the Bible itself, and of that Bible in its results as written in human history and human experience. Even among the books of the Bible it is a *non-such*. Who can imitate it? Who can excel it? Who can equal it? Who, unless one inspired as David was—the sweet Psalmist of Israel—who could say, “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.” Surely the conclusion is irresistible: None but an inspired man—and we used the word inspired in its

highest sense—is competent to furnish a Psalmody for the Church of God to-day any more than in Old Testament times—may we not say, much less competent *now* than *then*? But the same conclusion follows—

2. *From the fact that God did deem it necessary to raise up and inspire men to prepare a Book of Psalms for his Church.* It is a maxim the force of which even a heathen could appreciate, “never introduce a god except upon an adequate occasion.” If a book of Psalms could have been given without inspiration, we may be sure that God would not have inspired men to do it; for he never interposes in a supernatural manner without necessity or sufficient reason. When Christ was on earth he never, so far as the record shows, cured a disease by a miracle which could have been cured by ordinary means. When he raised up Lazarus from the dead, he exerted his divine power only in doing what could not be done by human agency. When the stone was to be rolled away and the living man was to be unbound, he said to those who stood by, “Roll away the stone—loose him and let him go.” It was only when the dead corpse was to be quickened with renewed life that

he spake the words of divine power, "Lazarus, come forth." Now, if God has given to his Church a manual of praise by a supernatural inspiration, the inference is more than presumptive; it is fair and legitimate, that nothing less than this is requisite for that purpose. Thus we are led to the same conclusion both from the nature of the case and from the fact that God has deemed such inspiration necessary. Inspired songs we must have. Nothing else and nothing less will serve the purpose.

The only question which remains to answer is, have any such been given to the New Testament Church? If so, when and by whom? This brings us to the

Second Premise. *No such songs have been given either by the Saviour or his inspired apostles and prophets; nor is there any promise of inspiration or authority given to any one to prepare such songs.* That Christ or his apostles have furnished such a book or any additional songs to the Book of Psalms, will not, I suppose, be asserted. If they did prepare and use such themselves, we have no record of it, and there is no trace of them now; they are lost and their place cannot be supplied. But is there no promise or authority given to the Church to supply

this supposed want which the Saviour and his apostles failed to supply? No, none whatever! We have many promises of the assistance of the Spirit in making our own prayers and in leading the prayers of others, but nowhere throughout the whole New Testament a single promise or the slightest hint of any such promise for making our own hymns, much less the songs of the Church. We have the command to “sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs”—none to make them. There is ample authority for using those then in existence—not a particle for bringing into existence any others.

Again, when Jesus “ascended on high and received gifts for men,” he bestowed upon the Church all the gifts necessary for her edification to the end of time. But among all these mentioned (*Eph.* 4: 11; *I. Cor.* 12: 8–11, 28) we look in vain for the gift of a Psalmist or the spirit of Psalmody, and yet, as we have seen, if songs of praise other than or in addition to those already in her possession, were to be given to the Church, such a gift was absolutely necessary. That no such gift was either bestowed or promised by the great Head of the Church is conclusive demonstration that no others were needed. We are constrained, therefore, to say what to

some may appear harsh, but what we think truth justifies us in saying, and even requires to be said, *that whoever undertakes to prepare* songs of praise to be used in the worship of God in addition to or in place of those which God has given, not only does so without warrant and authority from Christ, but thereby arrogates to himself the power and prerogatives of the Spirit of God, and presumes to do that which none but one supernaturally endowed by inspiration is competent to do—an arrogance and presumption which might well make one shudder. Is not, then, the conclusion at which we have been aiming all but irresistible: *No other songs but those contained in the Book of Psalms have been provided by divine authority either in the Old or New Testament, and, therefore, all others by whomsoever else provided are excluded.*

We have space only for a brief notice of those two passages in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, where direction is given to sing hymns and spiritual songs as well as Psalms, which furnish the only plausible objection against our argument from a scriptural basis and in favor of the use of uninspired hymns and songs. Besides what

we have already said in relation to these passages as furnishing authority in the New Testament for the use of Psalms, it is only necessary farther to observe—

1. That the very language implies that these hymns and songs were then in existence and familiar to those to whom the apostle wrote. Where are they to be found if not in the Book of Psalms?

2. There is here no authority to make hymns and songs, but only to use those already made, and yet it is this very authority for making which it is necessary to find.

3. These very titles, and all of them are found in the Book of Psalms, the only ones known to be in existence at that time.

4. If any others were in existence and in use in the Church they must have been inspired as we have seen, and if so, they are now lost and there is no authority here or elsewhere in the New Testament to supply their place or to use those which are not inspired.

5. That inspired songs are referred to is evident from the word *spiritual*, which is nowhere applied in the New Testament but to that of which the Holy Spirit is the author.

6. They are to be used as a means of “being filled with the spirit”—to which

end the words of inspiration are peculiarly adapted.

7. We are to sing them as a means of letting the "word of Christ dwell in us richly"—language which will apply more appropriately to that Book of Psalms, which are all the word of Christ, and which are full of Christ, than to any human composition whatsoever.

For a more extended and exhaustive exegesis and discussion of these two passages the reader is referred to the admirable remarks of Dr. Cooper contained in the "True Psalmody," page 73 and onward, of which these seven points are a brief outline taken from the Argument and Illustration of the Testimony.

From these considerations, therefore, we are warranted in viewing these passages as furnishing strong corroborative evidence in favor of instead of against our position, containing as they do an apostolic injunction to praise God by means of those "Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" which he himself had given to the Church, and which, so far as we know, were the only ones then in existence.

We have now finished our argument, and shown a scriptural warrant for our position

viz: it is the will of God as indicated in his word, that the songs contained in the Book of Psalms, and they only, should be used in his formal worship. We have carefully avoided all *side* issues and arguments *ad hominem*, and confined our attention exclusively to the Scripture as the sole and sufficient arbiter on this subject. All the questions of history, of experience, or of expediency, are subordinate to this fundamental inquiry, what is the will of God? And as we said before, so now we say again, when this is settled satisfactorily to the conscience of the Church, there will be little difficulty in adjusting these others and determining the place of other sacred songs and their proper use. That "the devotional compositions of uninspired men" have their proper use and place cannot and will not be denied. It is their improper use and the putting of them in place of God's songs in his worship—in singing his praise—which we oppose, and which has caused the disturbance and division in the Church of God. Let us all go back to the ground occupied by our fathers in the purest times of the Reformation, and allow nothing to have place in the worship of God, but that which has the positive sanction of his authority, either by express Scripture

precept or example, or by good and necessary inference from it. Let this be done, and it will not be long till these divinely prepared and appointed Psalms will again occupy their appropriate place in the worship of God, as in the best days and purest Churches of the Reformation and the whole Church of God once more "*with a voice together sing.*" May the Lord hasten it in his time!

In order to present the argument in one view, I offer the following

RECAPITULATION.

First Premise—That only is to be used in the formal worship of God which he hath appointed for that purpose.

Second Premise—The songs contained in the Book of Psalms, and they only, have been given and appointed by God to be used in singing his praise.

Ergo—In singing his praise, these only should be used; or, "it is the will of God that the songs," etc.

That nothing should be used in his worship but that which he hath appointed, we argue—

1. Because obedience to the will of God belongs to the essence of worship.

2. God claims this as his prerogative to

prescribe the manner and means of his worship, and is extremely jealous of this prerogative.

3. Because this positive divine authority and appointment is necessary as the warrant and foundation of that divine faith, "without which it is impossible to please God."

That the songs contained in the Book of Psalms, and they only, have this divine authority and appointment, we argue—

1. From the very form of the Psalms, as "religious, ecclesiastical lyrics," designed to be "sung, not read," and from the name of the book, "Tehillim"—book of praises.

2. That they were so used with divine approval in the Old Testament Church down to the time of our Saviour.

3. That their collection into a book, and their place in the sacred canon, is sanctioned by his authority.

4. That this appointment did not terminate, but passed over into the New Testament Church, unless expressly abrogated or superseded.

5. That instead of being abrogated, their use was expressly sanctioned and enjoined by our Saviour and his apostles.

6. That they have not been superseded

by others; because—(1) our Saviour and his inspired apostles have left no others; nor (2) has any promise or authority been given in the New Testament to prepare any other; (3) nor is there any mention of the gift of the Spirit of Psalmody; and yet (4) such a spirit of inspiration is absolutely necessary to the preparation of such songs of praise, both from the nature of the case and from the fact that God saw fit to inspire men to furnish such songs, which he would not have done had it not been necessary.

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