

A
DISCOURSE

ON

PSALMODY.

DELIVERED AT NEWBURGH,

BEFORE THE

PRESBYTERY OF HUDSON,

SEPTEMBER, 1801.


BY JONATHAN FREEMAN, A. M. V. D. M.

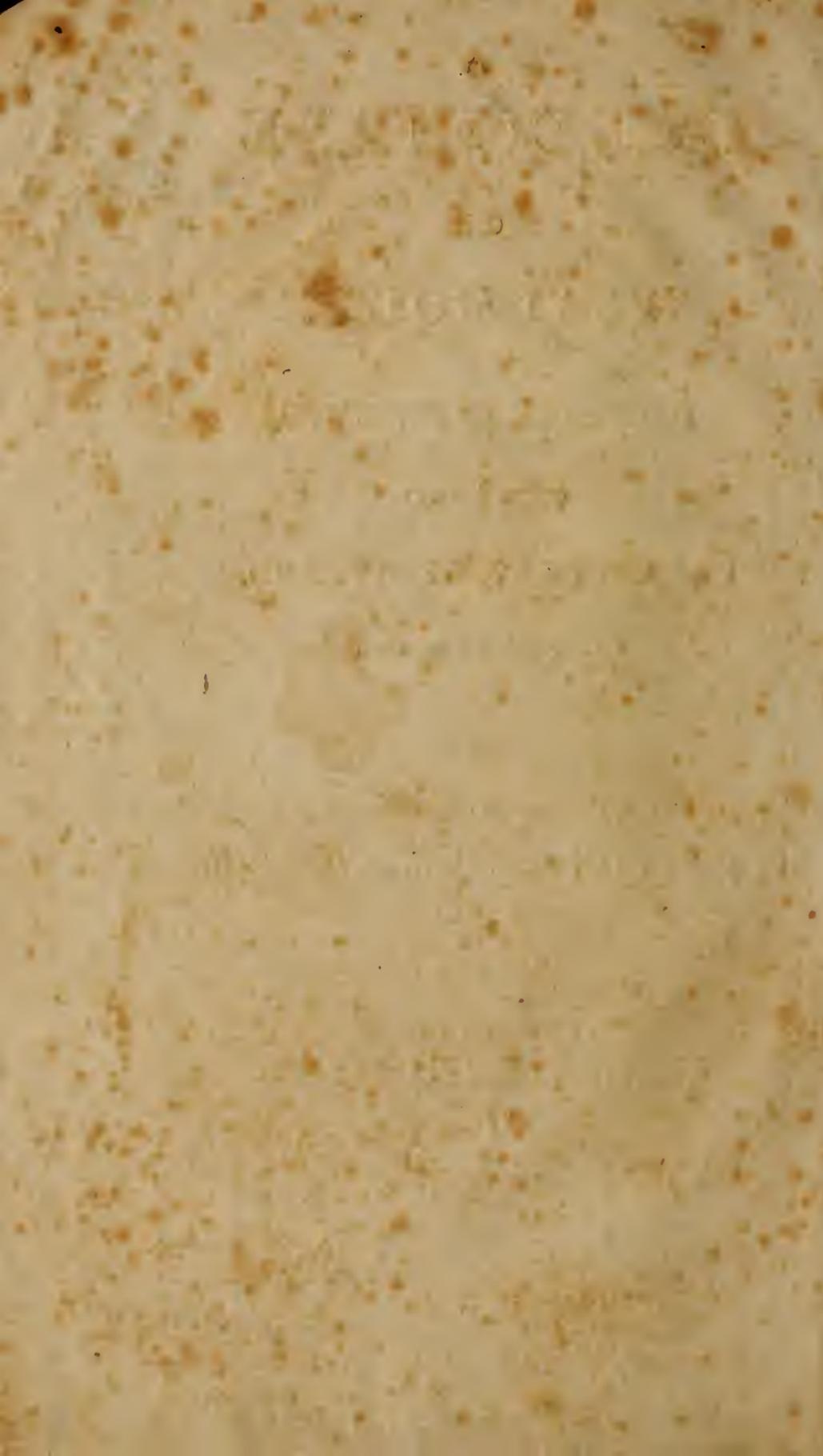
NEWBURGH,

PRINTED BY DENNIS COLES.

1801.



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A DISCOURSE, &c.

COL. iii. 16, 17. *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; Teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*

THE apostle in the context, urges the vigorous exercise of the christian graces. And in the passage under discussion, he points to a principal mean by which these graces may be roused into activity. It is addressing to God sacred anthems of praise. We are also directed to *the word of Christ* as the proper source of our divine songs. *The word of Christ* is an appropriate appellation of the gospel. The scriptures of the old testament, are, in a remote sense, *the word of Christ*, because they were dictated by his spirit, and because he is their ultimate object. But the gospel is, in a peculiar sense, *the word of Christ*. This shall be made apparent in the sequel.

That we may be amply furnished with songs of praise, *the word of Christ* must dwell richly in us. It must be cordially received, assiduously searched, and carefully observed. Our knowledge of the gospel must be extensive, and more than speculative. The heart is the principal place of its abode. Here it must dwell *in all wisdom*. To an ample fund of experimental acquaintance with the gospel, we must add a sufficient stock of wisdom, that we may suitably improve the various occurrences of life. Thus furnished, we must conscientiously engage in the delightful and divine employment of *Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord*. From the rich indwelling of *the word of Christ*, we shall be able to teach and admonish each other, to awaken and inflame our pious affections, in celebrating the praises of the SACRED THREE. Nothing will more awaken the whole soul, and elevate it to God and divine things, than a holy psalm well composed and well sung. Much care, however, should be taken, that we sing not only with the graces of music, but with divine *grace in the heart*; with attention and devotion to the Lord. And all our singing, as well as every other

duty, should be performed in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

From these general observations on the passage of scripture proposed for discussion, I invite your attention to this point; namely, *Singing praises to God is an important duty obligatory upon christians, and the subjects of our songs of praise should chiefly be derived from the gospel.*

The first branch of this position is universally acknowledged in the christian church. It is the last branch, therefore, which I shall now illustrate and establish.

I. The subjects of our psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, should chiefly be derived from the gospel of Christ. I say *chiefly* from the gospel, because we should borrow light and advantage from every part of the scriptures that will afford them; and because I intend to shew that the psalms of David should not be used as the *only system* of praise in gospel churches:

That the subjects of our psalms of praise should chiefly be taken from the gospel of Christ, I would prove

1st. From the first clause of my text. *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.*

By the word of Christ, in this place, we are to understand the gospel. Paul styles it 'the word of the truth of the gospel, which is come to you.' (a.) In the twentieth and third verse, he urges the Colossian believers 'not to be moved away from the hope of the *gospel* which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature under heaven.' Again; he says that they 'were complete in Christ,' (b.) and warns them not to adulterate the *gospel* with mixtures taken from the pagan philosophy, nor from the ceremonial rites of the Mosaic dispensation, which had received its accomplishment in Christ Jesus. Hence it is manifest that the Colossians were not directed to the old testament in quest of *the word of Christ*, but to the gospel.

In the epistle to the Hebrews, we read that 'God, who at sundry times, and in diverse manners spake unto the fathers by the prophets, hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by his son.' (c.) But how did God speak to the fathers by the prophets, except in the scriptures of the old testament? How does God speak to us by his son? I answer, in the gospel. Here you see that the apostle, in writing to the jews, distinguishes the gospel from all the revelations of the divine will in the old testament. Surely then, in writing to the Gentile Colossians, he speaks of the gospel under the title of *the word of Christ*.

Pool, perhaps, our best commentator on the bible, informs us that Grotius, Davenant, and other eminent divines agree, that

(a.) Col. i. 5, 6.

(b.) Col. ii. 10.

(c.) Heb. i. 1, 2.

the word of Christ is the doctrine of the gospel. The learned and pious bishop Davenant says, that the gospel is called the word of Christ, because it was revealed and preached by Christ, and speaks of Christ. The learned Doctor Doddridge calls *the word of Christ* the gospel. Hence it is evident that by *the word of Christ* we must understand the gospel. And it is as evident that the exhortation in my text, is tantamount to a command to take the subjects of our praise from the gospel. For the principal reason alleged, why *the word of Christ* should dwell richly in the Colossian believers, was, that they might be enabled to teach and admonish one another, in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. If they were always to sing David's psalms, there could be no necessity for *the word of Christ* to dwell richly in them, that they might be furnished with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. They should rather have been urged to become thoroughly acquainted with the psalms of David, that they might be qualified for the great work of praise.

The apostle exhorted the Colossians to *Let the word of Christ dwell in them richly*; and then teaches them how they should apply it, namely, in *teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*. And this affords a

2d, argument to the point before us.

To teach and admonish each other, was the leading design why *the word of Christ* should dwell richly in them. Would it not be strange to urge the Colossians, to obtain a thorough acquaintance with the gospel, with a view to praise God, and yet, when they celebrate his praise, they must not do it in gospel songs, but in those of the old testament? Such an interpretation would be wresting the text with a witness. I would not venture upon such a perversion of scripture. The manifest sense of the apostle, therefore, is, that they should celebrate the praises of God in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs which are derived from the gospel of Christ.

In the epistle to the Ephesians we find a parallel to our text. (*d.*) 'Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the spirit.' And how was this fulness of the spirit to be manifested and improved? By 'speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.' And here there is enjoined a strict regard to the gospel, 'Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.' And what are some of the principal things for which they would give thanks in their anthems of praise? Would they not bless God for their election?—their predestination to the adoption of sons?—their justification through the righteousness of Christ, and their being

made fellow-citizens with the saints? And where will you find these precious gospel privileges in the psalms of David? If it was their duty to sing those psalms, why did not Paul direct the Colossians to them? There is no psalm of David, in which we are directed to approach God in the duty of praise and thanksgiving, for the peculiar blessings of the gospel, in the name of Jesus Christ. And, therefore, as we are urged to thank God in the name of Christ for these blessings, and no such songs of praise being found in David, the conclusion must be evident to every unprejudiced mind, that our hymns of praise should be taken from the gospel, and not from David.

Shall we pray and preach in gospel language, and when we sing, enter a Jewish synagogue, and use the psalms of the old dispensation? If I should preach a sermon, and exclude from it the name of Jesus Christ, and his righteousness, would you not think it a very defective discourse? If I should pray in the language of the old testament, that Christ might come, and obey the law and suffer and atone for sin, would you call it praying? And why should we sing in this manner? Shall we take our sermons and prayers from the gospel, but all our songs of praise from the old testament? What substantial reason can be assigned for this? For such practice no divine authority can be alleged. Had God commanded us to sing David's psalms under the gospel, the controversy on this subject had never arisen. We should be obliged to obey, even if we were unable to discover the reason of the commandment.

Some of David's psalms are prophecies of the then coming Messiah. And when we use them in singing, do we not place ourselves in a Jewish synagogue, and look for Christ yet to come? Examine this in every view, and if it is not reducing christians to a state of Judaism, which the gospel condemns, I cannot understand plain English. When we have been meditating upon the cross of Christ, and redemption through his blood, till our affections are kindled into a devout flame, shall we express these pious affections in Jewish songs of praise?—in the types and shadows of the Jewish system? Shall we confine our attention entirely to the prediction, when its accomplishment is presented to our view? Shall we light up a candle in the full blaze of the meridian sun?

When we behold the promised Messiah already come; when we realize his sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven as our intercessor; shall we praise God for these glorious events in the language of prediction? How strange, and unaccountable is such conduct in professing Christians! Let none presume to mention the precious name of Christ in a sermon, or prayer, who will exclude it from his songs of praise. If it had

been the apostle's design to direct us to David's psalms, would he not have given us express information to that purpose? There is not the least intimation of this in our text, nor any of those passages, where we are directed to approach God in songs of praise. That we are not directed to David is farther evident from the diversity of phrase which the apostle uses; psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. We have no hint in scripture that David's psalms were ever designated by these titles. They are frequently quoted in the new testament, but always under the title of *psalms*. 'David himself saith in the book of *psalms*.' (e.) 'It is written in the second *psalm*, thou art my son—he saith also in another *psalm*, thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.' (f.) 'Again, it is written in the book of *psalms*.' (g.)

Thus you see, when new testament writers quote the book of psalms, it is under the express title of *psalms*. They are no where called hymns and spiritual songs. If, therefore, Paul designed to shew that we should sing those psalms exclusively, why does he urge us to use, besides them, hymns and spiritual songs? Since the psalms of David are never distinguished by the title of hymns and spiritual songs, it must be evident to every person not infatuated with bigotry, that the apostle directs us to songs of praise derived from the gospel. No other conclusion can fairly be drawn.

But, above all, does not the apostle direct us to subjects of praise and gratitude different from what are recorded in the old testament?—to wonders which had no existence under the Mosaic dispensation? And shall the wonders of redeeming love, which the gospel presents to view, be dressed in Jewish language, when we sing them? Shall we celebrate the Redeemer's benefits, the privileges and glories of the gospel, on the Jewish harp and organ? The apostle throughout this epistle fixes our attention on the gospel which the old testament saints had not received. And it is from this source that we must take the materials of our anthems of praise, by which we are to teach and admonish each other. This conclusion is as evident as any doctrine taught in the holy scriptures.

That the matter of our psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs should be taken chiefly from the gospel, receives farther evidence 3dly, from arguments that may be drawn from the old testament.

1. Let us advert to the practice of the saints in singing praises to God in the early ages of the church.

When Moses had conducted the Israelites through the Red Sea, he composed a song to be sung in commemoration of their happy deliverance from Egyptian vassallage. (b.) This salvation of

(e.) Luke xx. 42. (f.) Acts xiii. 33, 35. (g.) Acts i. 20.
(b.) Exodus xv.

Israel may be considered as a shadow of the great salvation which Christ has procured for believers. And shall the Israelites celebrate their temporal deliverance in an anthem of praise? And shall we, in our spiritual songs, pass over in silence our great salvation from sin and hell, which was accomplished under the gospel dispensation? If we should hold our peace upon this glorious event, would not the stones immediately cry out and overwhelm us with confusion? Deborah and Barak sang another song adapted to the occasion of their victory over their enemies. (i.) Did time permit, and necessity require, I could shew a number of songs which the saints, under the old testament, sung upon receiving particular favors from God. And shall we not imitate their practice? Has not the Lord done greater things for us which demand suitable anthems of praise? Did not Christ open the eyes of the blind, cause the deaf to hear, and the lame to walk? Did he not give bread to the hungry?—living waters to the thirsty?—restore limbs to the maimed and life to the dead? Has he, by his vicarious satisfaction to divine justice, delivered us from the guilt of sin? Has he, by the power of the Holy Ghost, delivered us in some good measure from the power of sin, and is he preparing us for a *blessed immortality*? And shall we have no psalms to commemorate these mercies?

Such spiritual songs must be derived from the gospel. They cannot be found in David. Hence we are not to be confined to David's psalms. The Jewish church itself were not confined to them but sung a great variety of others which you will find on examination. Some were composed by Asaph, some by Heman and Ethan. Moses composed the ninetieth. And a considerable number of psalms, in use among the Jews, were written by persons whose names were not recorded. David wrote but little more than half the book of psalms. Many of them were composed three hundred years after his death. The 79th psalm laments the ravages of the Jewish nation by the Chaldeans under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. The 137th deplors the reproaches of their enemies while they were in a state of vassalage in Babylon. The 85th and 126th record the divine goodness displayed in their emancipation from that captivity. This took place about four hundred years after the death of David.

Thus you see that the Jewish church were not confined to David's psalms, but sung many others, composed by different persons, and at long periods of time after David's decease. And if they did not constantly use them, why should we not follow their example? The Jews praised God for new and special favors, and why should not this be the practice of christians?

2. Let us advert to some predictions in the old testament respecting the gospel dispensation.

Isaiah, having spoken of the 'giving of Christ for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles'—as it were, addressed christians, 'sing unto the Lord a *new song*'. (*l.*) But where will you find this new song in the old testament psalms? This prophecy was delivered about three hundred years after David's time, as you may learn from the chronology of the kings of Judah; and this shews that God did not intend to confine the christian church to the psalms of David.

There are other prophecies respecting the days of the gospel which serve to establish the point under discussion. Isaiah represents the 'desert rejoicing and blossoming as the rose.—It shall rejoice, even with joy and singing.' (*l.*) 'Sing unto the Lord for he hath done excellent things'. (*m.*)

In the prospect of a large ingathering of souls to Christ among the Gentiles, the prophet enjoins, 'Sing, O heavens; and be joyful O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.' (*n.*) In that day shall ye say, praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the Lord; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth.' (*o.*)

To these occasions, David's psalms are not adapted. And in our hymns of praise shall these glorious things be passed over in silence? When God commands us expressly, by his prophet, to sing unto him a new song, because he hath done excellent things for us, shall blinded bigotry refuse compliance? Shall we reject evangelical songs which recognise the excellent things the Lord hath wrought for us? Did the Jews sing praises to God for every new deliverance?—did the prophets feel themselves transported at every glimpse of gospel light?—did they foretell the blessings of gospel times, and enjoin upon christians new songs of praise in which those blessings are recognised?—what shall we say? Can we resist the force of such practice, and oppose such exhortations and injunctions? It must hence appear manifest that our spiritual songs should be derived from the gospel.

This truth gains additional strength,

4thly, from arguments presented to view in the gospel.

Here we shall find a number of songs of praise widely different from those of David.

An excellent song of Mary we find recorded in Luke's gospel. (*p.*) From an overflowing spirit, she celebrates with adoring

(*l.*) Isaiah xlii. (*l.*) Isaiah xxxv. (*m.*) Isaiah xii.
 (*n.*) Isaiah xlix. (*o.*) Isaiah xii. (*p.*) Luke i. 46—

admiration, the infinite mercy of God towards herself, and the fulfilment of his promises to the Fathers of her nation. Zacharias' lips burst open in their rapturous anthem, in which he 'blesseth the Lord God of Israel, who had visited and redeemed his people, and had given light to them that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide their feet into the way of peace.' (g.)

A multitude of the heavenly host announced the birth of Emmanuel in a pathetic anthem: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.' (r.) Shall we not catch the sacred pleasing sound and re-echo the enraptured song? The aged Simeon became invigorated by the view of Messiah, and broke out into devout and transporting raptures of praise in the temple. Anna the prophetess, in a song, 'gave thanks, and spake of him to all that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.' (s.)

Thus you see that evangelical songs were introduced at the dawn of the gospel. These persons were jews and some of them priests and prophets; but you clearly see that their attention was diverted from the old testament psalms, and that they were inspired to sing evangelical anthems upon the advent of the promised Messiah. New mercies under the old testament always induced the church to make new songs of praise. And those who embraced the Savior, continued the same rational practice in the beginning of the gospel dispensation. As soon as the gospel day began to dawn, the saints began to lay aside the jewish, and adopt an evangelical, psalmody. And shall we not follow their example, and take our spiritual songs from the gospel? Or shall we remain with the unbelieving jews and retain their ritual? If we are jews in one part of divine worship, why shall we not be jews in every part?—Can we in David's psalms praise God for the birth, life and miracles of Christ? Did Mary, Zacharias, the angels, Simeon and Anna, sing new songs of thanksgiving upon the birth of the blessed Redeemer? And shall we not recognise this joyful event in our holy anthems? What reason can be assigned for the unaccountable and strange conduct of those, who reject evangelical songs through a partiality for the jewish system?

What did the multitude sing when Christ made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem? They began to 'rejoice, and praise God, for all the mighty works they had seen: saying, blessed be the king that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.' (t.) Shall we never join in this sacred anthem? Did our Lord rebuke the multitude, as the Pharisees requested? Did he intimate that peculiar mercies should not be the subjects of their spiritual songs? No, he rebuked the Pharisees,

(g.) Luke i. (r.) Luke ii. (s.) Luke ii.
(t.) Luke xix.

and declared that if his disciples should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out? And are these things less interesting to us because they took place eighteen hundred years ago? Multitudes of believers under the gospel say nothing of the mighty acts of their Savior in their songs of praise? Shall we refuse to celebrate in our anthems the triumphs and glory of the blessed Redeemer, and prefer singing the salvation of Israel achieved by Moses, or the victories of Joshua and David? Are these things to be compared with the victories of Christ the Lord of Moses, and of Joshua and David? Shall we pass in eternal silence his acts, his unparalleled conquests over all the powers of hell when we celebrate his praises? Be astonished at this, O ye heavens!

Let us examine the writings of the apostles. Paul breaks out in this glorious anthem, after an affectionate view of redeeming love; 'blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things, in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved; in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.' (u.) Is this the language of the old testament? Or is it not purely evangelical? And shall we never celebrate in our songs these immense blessings, in which we are so deeply interested? Is not Paul, under divine inspiration, a sure guide? He praised God for redemption through his son, not in the language of David, but in that of the gospel.

Peter, the apostle of the circumcision, leaves on record another song of praise similar to that of Paul. (v.) And the beloved John erects another exalted monument of gratitude to the great Prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him, that loved us, and washed us from our sins, in his own blood; and hath made us kings, and priests unto God and the Father; to him be glory, and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (w.) And what hymns of praise are sung by the spirits of just men made perfect?—'They sang a new song, saying, thou art worthy to take the book, and open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hath redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hath made us unto our God, kings and priests.' (x.) 'I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and tongues

(u.) Ephesians i. (v.) 1. Peter i. (w.) Revelation i.
 (x.) Revelation v.

stood before the throne, and before the lamb, clothed in white robes and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb.' (y.) 'And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels, saying, worthy is the Lamb, that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and blessing.' (z.)—Permit me to ask where you will find these songs in the old testament? Here you see the apostles of our Lord, the saints and angels in heaven, celebrating the praises of God and the Lamb in spiritual songs no where to be found in the psalms of David. And can it be sinful to walk in the footsteps of the flock?—to follow our Lord's apostles?—to imitate the blessed above? The songs of the angels and saints in heaven are wholly evangelical, as appears from those which John records in the REVELATION.

Our Lord has taught us to pray, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' But angels and saints in heaven are employed, in celebrating the praises of the Redeemer, in songs unknown to the Jewish church. This is the will of God in heaven. We must pray that this will may be done, and we ourselves must do it on earth. But if we do not praise our Redeemer in evangelical songs, we are not doing his will, in one essential point, on earth, as it is done in heaven. And these songs are not to be found in the old testament psalms. The song above is 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory and blessing.' And shall this song never be sung in the gospel church, because it is evangelical? I can discover no other reason for excluding it from Christian assemblies.

That the subject matter of our psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, should chiefly be taken from the gospel, may be confirmed 5thly, from the practice of the church immediately after the time of the apostles.

I have already shewed you that a number of the Jews and the apostles sung new songs at the commencement of the new testament dispensation. There is not a remote hint that the apostles used, in public worship, the psalms of David, after our Lord's ascension. The primitive Christians, who immediately succeeded, must be supposed to have known the practice of the apostles. And if I can make it appear that the primitive Christians, did not use David's psalms, but psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs taken from the gospel, I think the point under discussion will be fully established.

The apostles had been taught by Christ himself, 'That all men

should honor the Son; even as they honor the Father.' (a) We honor Christ, when we preach him crucified. We honor Christ when we pray to the Father in his name. Thus we honor the Son in two branches of public worship. And should we not honor Christ in the other part of worship, by singing hymns of praise to him? I have shewed that this was the apostolic practice, and will now shew that the primitive christians followed the example of the apostles.

We have not all that light, on this subject, that we could wish from ecclesiastical history. Much darkness hangs over the first ages of the world, and over the first periods of christianity. However, we have considerable light to guide our steps through the beginning of the gospel dispensation. We have sufficient to shew that the primitive christians used hymns of praise, in honor to Christ, which were derived from the gospel.

Pliny the younger is acknowledged to be a correct writer. In his celebrated letter to Trajan the Emperor, written probably in the year of our Lord 107, he affirms that the christians 'were wont to assemble on a stated day,' I suppose the Lord's day, 'before it was light, and sing among themselves alternately a hymn to Christ as God.'* This testimony has been alleged by Grotius, as a proof of the christian religion, and by many others, who have written in defence of Christianity.

Thus you see from the testimony of Pliny that the primitive christians were not confined to David's psalms. A few of them, it appears, were sung. Tertullian observes that the 133d was sung in his day.† Those psalms of David which are not peculiar to him, nor to the jewish church, in regard to locality and the ceremonial rites, may be used in different ages. It is the *exclusive use* of David's psalms that I oppose. And I am supported by sufficient evidence taken from the practice of primitive christians. I can see no reason why Tertullian should particularize one psalm of David if they were all in general use. That other songs of praise were in general use is evident.

Basnage, in his celebrated history of the christian church, gives us a large account of the devotions of the primitive christians from Tertullian. Tertullian was an eminent father of the christian church in Africa, and flourished towards the close of the second century. In his time christians were not confined to David's psalms, but thought themselves at full liberty, in their religious worship, to use a variety of spiritual songs. Hence says Basnage, 'that neither the prayers they made to God, nor the hymns which they sung to his honor were reduced to rule; but every one drew them from the *holy scripture*, or from his own *treas-*

(a.) John v.

* See Appendix, letter [A.] † See Appendix, letter [B.]

sure, according to his genius or disposition. They sang, for instance, *hymns* in those feasts of charity and communion, which christians held together in the evening.*

Origen, another renowned father of the church in the second century, 'exhorted the people,' says Basnage, 'to strive with their hymns, by their psalms, by their spiritual songs, crying to God, that they might obtain the victory through our Lord Jesus.'† Here, this father seems to have an immediate reference to my text, in which, an express regard to Christ, is enjoined upon christians in their songs of devotion.

Eusebius, who is acknowledged to be the father of church history, introduces an author writing thus,—'Who is he that is ignorant of the books of Irenæus, Melito, and the rest, which declare Christ to be God and man?—The *psalms also and hymns of the brethren, written at the beginning* by the faithful, do set forth the praises of Christ the word of God, and attribute divinity to him.'‡

Nepos, an Egyptian bishop, composed many hymns, with which many of the brethren were mightily pleased—he was a man eminent for his skill in the holy scriptures, and for the many *psalms and hymns* he composed, which the brethren sung in their public meetings.*§

The argument will receive additional strength from another passage in Eusebius. Paulus Samosata, bishop of Antioch, revived the heresy of Artemon. Two councils of bishops, presbyters, and deacons were called upon this account. In the last council, about the year 270, he was excommunicated. Among the charges alleged against him, one was, that he abolished those psalms which were wont to be sung to the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ, as novel, and composed by modern authors.¶ Here we have a whole council agreeing that psalms had been, and ought still to be, sung, in honor of Christ, and accusing him who had abolished them of malicious wickedness, and as denying his God. And this council wrote a letter to the whole catholic church under heaven, expecting that they would justify the sentence of excommunication which had been passed against this heretic. But how could this council expect that all the churches of Christ would join in condemning this man for abolishing those psalms and hymns, if they had not been in use? Does not this prove to a demonstration that psalms and hymns, in honor of Christ were sung in all the churches?

Here we have the first rise of opposition to evangelical psalms and hymns. It arose from Arians who opposed our Lord's divinity.

* See Appendix, letter [C.] † See Appendix, letter [E.]

‡ See Appendix, letter [D.] ¶ See Appendix, letter [F.]

*§ Dr. Lardner, Vol. 3, p. 94.

A fourth council was held in Toledo, in Spain, in the year 633, when a number of presbyters of France, were excommunicated for refusing to sing the hymns of Hylary and Ambrose, which had been in use nearly three hundred years. Hence it appears that the successors of the apostles composed the hymns, psalms and spiritual songs that were sung by the primitive church. And these songs of praise were used in the churches for three hundred years after Christ. About this time the *psalms of David* were first introduced. This Mosheim declares to be fact, who must be ranked among our best ecclesiastic historians. And Theodoret informs us how they were introduced. They were brought in by Arians, and not by orthodox christians. David's psalms were introduced at Antioch in the time of Leontius, who was bishop of that city, and a strong Arian. Flavian and Diodorus two persons, who had not attained to any ecclesiastic dignity, but had great influence among the people, first made the innovation. They divided the choirs of singers at Antioch into two parts, and gave them David's psalms to sing by turns. This custom spread extensively among the churches. The principal reason was, because this century became devoted to Arianism. Constantius the emperor, and chief of the influential characters were Arians.

Thus the hymns and psalms, which had, from the beginning, been used in the church, were rejected. They continued in use, however, in some parts where Arianism did not so much prevail, until seven hundred years after Christ. At this time the Pope of Rome began to gain his ascendancy, and he prevailed, until Europe yielded to his authority. In such a situation of things, a reformation in singing could not be effected, even after Arianism, was in a great measure removed from the church, and of course the psalms of David continued in use.

Upon the whole then, it is manifest, that no practice of the christian church, appears more primitive and apostolical than that of singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, which are taken from the gospel. They were in general use for three hundred years after our Lord, during which time David's psalms were never sung, except a few of them occasionally.

In my text, Paul begins and ends with Christ. He leads us to the word of Christ as the copious fountain from which our holy anthems are to be derived. The primitive christians understood the text in this sense, and composed and sung hymns and psalms in honor of Christ. This practice continued in the church until three hundred years after Christ, when it was opposed by the Arians, who denied our Lord's divinity. And in those churches which were not so much under the influence of Arianism, evangelical songs were sung for seven centuries. After this the ignorance, bigotry, superstition and anti christianism of popery

prevailed, and like a mighty deluge, swept away every thing that was truly apostolical and primitive, for a number of centuries. But as soon as the church emerged from this awful deluge, she began to reform, not only in doctrine, but in her worship, and psalmody. The ancient evangelical songs of praise were revived, and they have been greatly improved in almost all the protestant churches. The exceptions are exceeding few in number.

II. I now proceed to shew what system of psalmody is best adapted to the gospel dispensation.

Some of David's psalms may be sung with propriety. But as a system, it appears, they were not designed by the head of the church, to be used under the gospel dispensation. We should borrow light and advantage from David, and from the prophets, from the evangelists and from the apostles. Our system of psalmody should be taken generally from the scriptures of the old and new testament, but specially and chiefly from the new testament. The types of the old testament, give place to the antitype, and the shadows to the substance, under the gospel. In the gospel, the prophecies which relate to the Messiah, are accomplished. And therefore every branch of divine worship should be evangelical. Not only the doctrines we preach, and prayers we make, but also the psalms we sing, should be replete with the gospel. We preach Christ crucified, we pray in his name, and Christ should be the theme of our spiritual songs. I cannot conceive any ground on which to establish the doctrine of dividing Christ, or of our being partly christians and partly jews in our worshipping assemblies.

Our system of psalmody, should embrace the essential doctrines of our holy religion. That there is an infinite and eternal God, the creator and governor of the world, is the first principle of religion. This principle runs through the bible. It is not peculiar to any one part. And therefore our psalms and hymns which embrace this principle may be founded on the scriptures generally. The doctrine of the holy TRINITY should sustain an eminent place in our divine anthems. But this doctrine is very obscurely taught in the old testament. We are chiefly indebted to the new testament for our knowledge of this important doctrine. Our psalms therefore which include this doctrine must be chiefly taken from the new testament. The divinity of the Son of God, and of the Holy Spirit, is among the essentials of our religion. But of this the jewish church was amazingly ignorant. The psalms of David speak in obscure language on this important subject. And shall we pass over in silence, in our psalms, the fulness, the glory, and perfections of our Savior and Comforter? These precious truths are clearly revealed in the gospel, and if we celebrate them, our songs must be derived from the gospel. The doctrines of prede-

tion, election, adoption, justification through the merits of Christ, regeneration and sanctification by the Holy Spirit, the resurrection and felicity above, are doctrines so obscurely taught in the old testament, that the apostle expressly declares that 'life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel.' (b.)

The birth, life, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession of Christ, and his second coming to judgment, are doctrines taught with infinitely more clearness in the new testament than in David's psalms.

David prays, 'Purge me with hyssop—blot out my transgressions—wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from sin.' (c.) But here is not a word of being justified through the righteousness of our Redeemer, and washed in the fountain of his blood. And therefore you cannot celebrate the praises of Jesus Christ, for his meritorious righteousness, his precious blood, his prevalent intercession in heaven, and for his second coming to judgment, unless you use an evangelical psalmody which embraces these doctrines.

It is the office of the Holy Spirit to enlighten the understanding, convince the sinner of iniquity, regenerate the heart, guide us into the truth, sanctify and comfort us. But where can you find these precious offices of the Holy Spirit in the old testament psalms? The glory of the blessed Spirit we should celebrate in hymns of praise, and if we perform this indispensable duty, our hymns must be taken from the gospel.

The promises of the old testament are accomplished in the new. But there are many promises peculiar to the gospel, which are nowhere mentioned in the old testament. And should not these precious promises have a place in our songs of praise. The Jews had access to God through priests and sacrifices. 'I will go into thy house with burnt offerings:—I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams; I will offer bullocks with goats.' Thus sang David. (d.) But that system being abolished, we have access to the throne of grace, through the new and living way which Christ hath consecrated to us through—his flesh. (e.) And should not this occupy a place in our psalms?

The Lord's supper and baptism are gospel ordinances. And should not our songs recognise these precious ordinances? Are we baptised in the name of the adorable TRINITY? And in the SUPPER do we not commemorate the love of the Father in the gift of the Son?—the love of the Son in consenting to be our Sa-

(b.) 2 Timothy i. 10 (c.) Psalm li. (d.) Psalm lxvi.

(e.) Hebrews x.

viour, and in what he did and suffered?—the love of the Holy Spirit manifested in the execution of his offices? And shall not these things occupy a conspicuous place in our hymns of praise to the SACRED THREE.

Thus it is manifest that the psalmody which is suited to the gospel state, should be taken from the gospel, and contain its peculiarities. But the psalms of David do not embrace the peculiarities of the gospel, and this is a principal reason why they are not, as a system of psalmody, suited to the gospel dispensation. The psalms of David were adapted to the ceremonial rites, and since those rites are abolished, the psalms cannot be sung with any propriety. It is very evident that many of David's psalms are so intimately connected with, and founded upon, the ceremonial institutions, that they have no being beyond the institutions themselves. Of this description are those which declare that the institutions still exist, and in singing which the worshippers affirm that they will practice agreeably to them. I will for sake of example illustrate this a little. David sings, 'I will go into thy house with burnt offerings:—I will offer bullocks with goats. (*f.*) While the ceremonial rites existed, David was obligated to offer sacrifices: and therefore this psalm was perfectly adapted to the ceremonial system. But what have we to do with those sacrifices under the gospel? They were types of Christ, and terminated in the great sacrifice which Christ made of himself. So that we cannot in truth declare we will make those offerings, when we do not intend to make them; and since those very offerings have been abrogated by Jesus Christ.

Again, 'Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.' (*g.*) These new moons, and feast days are annulled, and therefore we cannot sing this psalm. 'Praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.' (*b.*) Is it not impossible to sing this psalm unless we introduce these instruments? For the psalmist expressly commands us to praise God on these instruments. Thus you see that many of the old testament psalms are so connected with the ceremonial system, and interwoven with the instruments of music then in use, that we cannot sing them, unless we perform the ceremonial rites on which they are founded, and use the instruments of music with which they are connected. And this is a conclusive argument that God never designed them as a system of psalms for the gospel church. It is contrary to the nature of things to sing them. And God never commands contra-

dictions. The songs of praise under the old testament dispensation embraced the peculiarities of that state of things. And it must be evident to every unprejudiced mind, that in the christian church, the songs of praise should embrace the peculiarities of the gospel.

There is but one passage of scripture, that I have seen alleged, that contains in it the least shadow of divine authority to sing David's psalms. This passage is produced by Dr. Clark, and others of the same opinion. Upon investigation it will be found not to give the shadow of countenance to their sentiments. The passage is recorded in the second book of Chronicles, and the twenty-ninth chapter, and the thirtieth verse. 'Moreover, Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer: and they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped.' But will any man of common sense, and common acquaintance with scripture, seriously affirm that this passage contains an injunction on christians to sing the psalms of David? Let us examine the text and context. We learn from the first part of the chapter, that the temple of God had been defiled—the doors shut—the lamps put out—the incense and offerings had not been made for a long time, on which account the wrath of God had fallen heavy upon his people. The fathers had been slain with the sword, their sons and daughters, and their wives made captives. Such was the deplorable state of the temple, and jewish nation when Hezekiah came to the throne. In the third verse we are informed, that in the first year of his reign, he opened the door of the Lord's house, and set it in order for the performance of divine service.—They prepared the offerings which God required to be made in his house. Instructions were then given to the Levites. 'And he set the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment, of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet: for so was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets.' 'When the burnt offerings began, the song of the Lord also began with the trumpets, and with the instrument ordained by David king of Israel.' Now, what does all this prove? It shews clearly that on this particular occasion they sang the words of David and Asaph. But were they not as explicitly commanded to sing with cymbals, psalteries, harps, and trumpets? And if the commandment obliges us to sing the psalms of David and Asaph, does it not as strongly oblige us to sing with cymbals, psalteries, harps, and trumpets? Has God any where declared that we must sing the words and not use the instruments? It is evident to every unprejudiced mind, that 'the commandment of the Lord by the prophets,' extends equally to

the songs, and to the instruments:—I imagine that the advocates for the old testament psalmody would oppose the introduction of these instruments more strenuously than any other denomination of christians. And herein they are inconsistent; and they separate what God has connected in his commandment.

I have now proved that we have no authority, divine nor human, for singing David's psalms; and I have offered various arguments to shew, that they should not be used as a system of psalmody under the gospel. On the contrary I have proved that our psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs should be founded chiefly on the gospel.

Those on the opposite side, would exclude all the word of God from their psalmody except the psalms of David. But I would exclude no part, that would afford us light and advantage in our songs of praise. I would take some from David and the prophets; but I would take chiefly from the gospel, because here 'life and immortality are brought to light.' I have also shewed what system of psalmody would be the best adapted to the gospel worship:—that it should in an eminent degree embrace the peculiarities of the gospel.

I shall here take notice of the different versions which are used in the churches. There are several versions in use in the Low Dutch church in America. The Episcopal church has another, and different from the rest. The German church has a number of versions, if my information is correct. There is another, composed by Sternhold and Hopkins, that was in use a considerable time in some churches. The church of Scotland has made use of several versions. The one in present use was composed by Mr. Rouse. Doctor Watts' version is used in the most of the presbyterian churches in America, in the independent churches of England, in the congregational churches in New-England, and in the ana-baptist churches. A collection of hymns is used in the Methodist churches. Thus you see there is a variety of psalms and hymns in use in the church of Christ. And they are all *human compositions*. I mention this, because the advocates for David's psalms roundly affirm that human compositions ought not to be used in divine worship. But are not our sermons and prayers human compositions? And why should our songs of praise be different? Is it a more solemn act of worship to sing than pray? Sermons, prayers and psalms should be founded on scripture. But they are nevertheless human compositions.

There are some persons who suppose that the psalms commonly called David's, were composed and put into their present metre by David. And this, however untrue, has been taught by ministers of the gospel. This system of psalms was formerly in use in our churches, and is still retained in some of them. It is,

however, a mere version of David, and was composed by Mr. Rouse an English baron. This version was not introduced into the church till the middle of the seventeenth century. So that it did not make its appearance till sixteen hundred and fifty years after Christ. And if this is the only version that should be sung, how came it to pass that it was not used by the apostles, nor any church for so long a space as sixteen hundred and fifty years? Can you suppose that the apostles, and all their successors, were in an error until an hundred and fifty years ago? And can you suppose that the Episcopal church, the Dutch reformed, the Congregational, German, Anabaptist, and Presbyterian churches, are all in an error with respect to psalmody? Take the world through, and you will find only an exceeding small number of churches that make use of Rouse's version of psalms. And is this small number the only orthodox and pure churches under heaven? Are all the rest corrupt and erroneous, in which there are as learned and pious divines and private christians, as in the other churches?

The version of psalms by Rouse then is of late date, and is as much a human composition, as that of Watts. It was altered and amended by the General Assembly of the church of Scotland before it was introduced into the churches.

Stewart of Pardovan informs us that the assembly, in 1648, passed an act for examining the labors of Mr. Zachary Boyd upon other scripture songs. In 1706, the assembly passed an act in which they recommend the scripture songs of Patrick Simpson, minister at Renfrew, to the use of private families: and in order to prepare them for the *public use of the church*, this act was renewed in 1707. And by an act of assembly in 1708, their commission was intrusted and appointed to consider the printed version of the scripture songs with the remarks of presbyteries thereupon; and after examination thereof, they were authorized and empowered to conclude and emit the same, for the *public use of the church*. The present version of the psalms being ordered in the same manner in the year 1649.

The assembly also published and recommended a number of poems from Watts, whom they stile the pious and engenuous Doctor Watts. Thus you see that the General Assembly of the church of Scotland introduced Rouse's version of the psalms, and recommended various songs of praise to the use of their churches. And they were so far from thinking that the version of Rouse was given by inspiration, that they deemed it a very incomplete system of psalmody, and passed several acts, to have it enlarged and rendered more perfect.

As to the merits of the versions that have come under my notice, I shall make but a few remarks. That of Rouse, which some

ignorantly call David's psalms, was in general use in the presbyterian churches in America. It is, at present used in some of them, and in all the seceding churches. And I hesitate not to affirm, that it is very unsuitable for the gospel day. It will suit a jewish synagogue, but not a christian assembly. The metre is extremely barbarous. We are often obliged to sing two syllables to one note which makes an unpardonable jar in the music. Such as *ever, never, remember, spirit*. Another defect is apparent, every line does not contain the sense in itself. We are almost always obliged to sing two or three lines before we can learn the sense. This will be the case sometimes in all poetry. But it more frequently occurs in this version, than in any other with which I am acquainted. Another and principal defect is, it introduces the ceremonial rites which have been abolished.

Thus in the 66th psalm we sing,
 ' Burnt sacrifices of fat rams
 With incense I will bring ;
 Of bullocks and of goats I will
 Present an offering.'

When we sing this psalm we make it our own, and positively declare that we will offer the fat of rams, bullocks, and goats in sacrifice. This was proper when these offerings were obligatory upon the jewish church. But the offerings being annulled, it is improper to declare, in our acts of worship, that we will make them.

' Praise him with trumpets sound ; his praise
 With psaltery advance
 With timbrel, harp, string'd instruments
 And organs in the dance.' (i.)

We cannot sing this psalm unless we use the instruments which it mentions. If therefore we sing these psalms with consistency, we must introduce the trumpet, harp, psaltery, organ and the dance into the worship of God. These examples may suffice to shew that Rouse has revived the ceremonial rites, in his version, which are abolished. And hence it is not suited for divine worship in gospel churches.

Another reason against the use of this version of psalms, is because it does not embrace the peculiar doctrines, and precious promises of the gospel. We often hear the advocates for David's psalms, condemn sermons because they are not sufficiently replete with the doctrine of the righteousness of Christ, and the promises of the gospel. They frequently censure our ministers because they do not make such a free and full offer of salvation to sinners as they think ought to be done. But why do they not perceive their own inconsistency? Where will they find the name of Jesus

in their psalms? Where will they find us directed to the throne of grace in the name of Christ? Where are we directed to plead his righteousness, and the precious promises of the gospel in Rouse's version of the psalms which they use? And are these things to occupy no place in our sacred songs? At this be astonished O ye heavens! These are arguments against the exclusive use of this version, which never have, and never can be, refuted. Nay it is virtually condemned by the practice of the SECEDING church itself. In this church the minister gives a long lecture upon the psalm that is to be sung, in which he explains it in the language of the gospel. He shews how the types, predictions, and ceremonial rites are accomplished in Jesus of Nazareth. When his hearers sing, they must use the words of David and Asaph, but their minds must be impressed with ideas and sentiments of the gospel. Thus they tacitly condemn the system they use. They cannot sing the psalms till they are explained upon the plan of the gospel. And why not use psalms which carry the explanation in themselves? This explication is given, in the version of Doctor Watts as evangelically as it is in any of their lectures. It is much easier for the worshippers, when they sing, to have the *sentiments of the gospel clothed in the language of the gospel*. I forbear remarking on the psalms which are used in other churches. With those churches we have no controversy. Had not the version of Rouse been used in some of our churches, and had we not been so long and so severely condemned for introducing the version of Watts, I had never entered on this disagreeable subject.

I shall now answer the principal objections against the version of Doctor Watts, and then shew how well it is adapted to divine worship under the gospel dispensation.

1. It is objected that Doctor Watts has diminished from the holy scriptures in his version, and therefore it should not be used.

This is a most unreasonable, and unfounded objection. Doctor Watts deemed it improper to versify, for the use of the church, a number of David's psalms. And what then? Is this diminishing from them? Far from it. He informs you in his preface why he did not versify them. Does he not declare in the same preface that he highly esteems all David's psalms, which every christian must do. But some of them he believed the gospel church could not adopt as her own in divine worship. And therefore he did not versify them. His reasons, I confess never satisfied me, but he had a right to judge for himself and act accordingly. And no man of common sense and candor, can imagine, that, because he left some of David's psalms unversified, he diminished from scripture. If Doctor Watts had judged it proper to versify only twenty psalms, he had not diminished from the

holy oracles. This objection seems to be an invidious one, addressed to the prejudices of men, not so much for the sake of truth, as profelyting. And as it is often heard among us, I would observe that a person diminishes from scripture when he condemns any part of it as uninspired, and takes it out of his bible. Nothing short of this will amount to diminishing from the word of God. And can the most deep rooted bigotry and malevolence charge this on Doctor Watts?

2. It is objected that the version of Watts is not orthodox.

In psalm 51st, says the Doctor,

‘Should’st thou condemn my soul to hell
And crush my flesh to dust,
Heav’n would approve thy vengeance well;
And earth must own it just.’

This is said to be erroneous because God condemns none to hell after conversion to Jesus. But do not christians daily commit sins? And does not every sin deserve punishment? Mr. Robert Annau, in his animadversions on universal salvation, at page sixteenth, affirms that God would not do an ‘act of personal injustice to true believers, were he to cast them into utter darkness, and punish them for their sins eternally in hell, his atonement and their faith in it notwithstanding.’ And will not this entirely remove the charge which Doctor Clark alleges against Watts’ in-orthodoxy? Do not christians daily justify this psalm in their prayers? They are sensible of guilt and unworthiness. They confess these things before God, and acknowledge that he would be just in punishing them. Sin is a transgression of the law, and is in every circumstance a damnable evil.

3. Another error is charged on the 51st psalm,

‘A humble groan, a broken heart,
Is our best sacrifice.’

It is here asked whether Christ’s sacrifice is not the best? If so, Watts is erroneous. Doctor Watts lays down the sacrifice of Christ as the only ground of our salvation. He declares, as strongly as our language is capable, that we must be accepted *through the sacrifice and mediation of Christ only.*

‘No blood of goats nor heifer slain
For sin could e’er atone :
The death of Christ shall still remain
Sufficient and alone.’

Here you see that our salvation is bottomed on the death of Christ, which is considered as the only and all-sufficient atonement for our sins. And on this foundation, says the Doctor, we must offer up our sacrifices. And is it erroneous to assert that we have sacrifices to offer, and that one excels another? Let the scriptures speak in answer. ‘Present your bodies a living sacri-

see.' (k.) 'By him let us offer the *sacrifice of praise.*' To do good and communicate forget not, for with *such sacrifices* God is well pleased.' (l.)

Thus you see that we have sacrifices to offer to God. And says Doctor Watts,

'A humble groan, a broken heart
Is our *best sacrifice.*'

When we come before God to offer the sacrifice of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, if we come with hearts broken and contrite, and are unable to speak a word, but pray with groanings which cannot be uttered, as the apostle speaks, this is our best sacrifice, says Doctor Watts. And does not God declare the same thing in substance? 'But to this man will I look, even to him *that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*' (m.) Hence the objection vanishes, and the psalm appears orthodox, and agreeable to scripture.

4. Another error is found in the fourth psalm.

'When our obedient hands have done
A *thousand works of righteousness.*'

It is here asked what works of righteousness can we perform? I answer, *ten thousand.* Praying, singing, preaching, believing, hoping, visiting the sick, relieving the poor, are all works of righteousness. 'He that believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his *faith* is counted for righteousness.' (n.) He that *worketh righteousness* shall never be moved.' (o.) And the *work of righteousness* shall be peace. (p.) In the face of these scriptures how can any man charge the Doctor with an error when he speaks of our doing a *thousand works of righteousness*? Mr. Rouse is guilty of the same error in his version, in the fifteenth psalm.

'The man that walketh uprightly,
And *worketh righteousness.*'

What is the difference between working righteousness, and doing works of righteousness? And if we can perform one work of righteousness, we can do a thousand.

The Doctor does not depend on his works for salvation.— He has learned Christ to better purpose. Read the whole verse, to which the objection is made.

When our obedient hands have done
A thousand works of righteousness
We put our *trust in God alone,*
And *glory in his pard'ning grace:*

(k.) Romans xii. 1. (l.) Hebrews xiii. 15, 16.
(m.) Isaiah lxvi. 2. (n.) Romans iv. 5.
(o.) Psalms xy. 2— (p.) Isaiah xxxii. 17.

I think the objection can find no entrance into any unprejudiced head, that is capable of understanding plain English.

Every objection, that I have seen alleged against the inorthodoxy of Doctor Watt's version of the psalms, can be as easily refuted as those which I have noticed, and therefore I dismiss this point.

If those who condemn the Doctor would spend that time in reading him with candor, which they spend in raising unfounded clamor against him, they would not find so many objections against the use of his version of the psalms. They would find them to be orthodox, to be highly evangelical, and well adapted to divine worship under the gospel. The more his psalms are read, the better they are esteemed by his inveterate opponents. And in general they are condemned by those who have never read them, and who are totally ignorant of their contents and merits.

A few remarks on the propriety of our *singing* the version of Doctor Watts, shall close this general head. We have no authority to meddle with any church out of our own bounds. They have a right to adopt any version they judge expedient. And if every denomination of christians would pursue this line of conduct, there would not be so many disputes, and divisions among the professed disciples of Christ.

I have already observed that the system of psalmody under the gospel, should embrace the peculiar doctrines, promises, and ordinances of the gospel. The system under the old dispensation was adapted to that dispensation. It embraced the ceremonial rites, and all the peculiarities of that state of things. So, our system of psalms, should embrace the peculiarities of the new dispensation. And these things are eminently contained in the version of Doctor Watts. The doctrine of the adorable Trinity; the divinity and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, are clearly asserted in this version.

‘ To God the Father’s throne
Perpetual honor raise;
Glory to God the Son;
To God the Spirit praise:
With all our powers,
Eternal King,
Thy name we sing
While faith adores.’

The birth, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession of Christ, and his second coming to judgment, are fully asserted in many of these psalms. Here we may celebrate, in triumphant strains, our justification through the merits of our Redeemer—our election and adoption into the family of heaven;

our sanctification by the grace of the Holy Spirit; our perseverance in a course of obedience to the divine will, and eternal life through the mediation of Jesus Christ, are abundantly set forth in these evangelical psalms. And these things are the *life and spirit* of our sacred songs. Were they destitute of these precious doctrines of grace so peculiar to the gospel, our singing would be no better 'than sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.' Hence I think it abundantly evident, that the version of Watts is infinitely better suited to divine worship in the christian church than that of Rouse. And if at any future period, a better system of psalms than that of Watts, should make its appearance, the church would be under obligations to introduce it into divine worship. And this is no innovation nor heresy, but agreeable to scripture; to the practice of the church in all ages, to reason and common sense. Why then should there be such loud and constant clamor against the introduction of Watts' version into our churches? Why are we represented as innovators, as impure, erroneous in doctrine, and lax in discipline? The impartial world will judge, and God will judge of such unreasonable clamor and censure.

III. And lastly, I shall make some general observations on singing, or music.

A few remarks on this head shall relieve your patience.

The principles of music and poetry are as old as creation. Hence says, the celebrated Dr. Blair of Edinburgh, 'man is both a poet and musician by nature.'* They have been cultivated in all ages, and among all nations. Poetry and music were early introduced into the church of God. They have continued to our day, and, no doubt, will exist to the end of the world, and through an eternal duration. Hence music should be cultivated by every christian.

Some churches, to assist vocal, have introduced instrumental, music. Whether organs may be lawfully used in a church, I think, does not admit of dispute. Any church, that is able to purchase an organ, and employ an organist, has an undisputed right to do so. But upon the whole, I would, for several reasons unnecessary to be detailed, prefer vocal music. But it should be improved, so that the church may sing gracefully and regularly, without producing jar and confusion. Some churches are so culpably ignorant of music, that almost every one has a tune by himself. One will sing upon a high, another upon a low pitch. Some will be too fast, others too slow, so that jars and confusions pervade the whole assembly. No one should sing *audibly*, unless he can sing in unison with the clerk.

* Lecture on Rhetoric, &c. Vol. 2, Pa. 239.

Other churches confine themselves forever to two or three tunes. They sing with one voice indeed without jar, but their tunes are as destitute of music as a sounding brass, or an instrument with half the strings broken.

Nothing so much elevates the devout soul to God, as music well performed, and hence it merits assiduous cultivation. 'We are very sensible,' says doctor Samuel Blair, 'of the communication of external sound through the organs of hearing. And not only of its different tones, as the high and low, the clear, the soft, the shrill, and the harsh: but likewise of certain more inward effects, which we usually designate by the epithets, sweet, or soothing, melting, or elevating, jarring, or disgusting. Of these effects we are still more sensible, where the sound proceedeth from simple melody to harmony.—We are not only so constituted as to receive these impressions of harmony; but it hath also pleased our Maker to establish an intimate connection between sounds, thus impressed, and the sentiments of the heart. Upon an accurate examination of our feelings we may discern an admirable similarity between those effects of mere sound, and those of which we are sensible on occasion of emotions of heart, originating in the conception or contemplation of affecting objects. The sensations produced by the tender, plaintive, and melting strains, seem as mere feelings, to be of the same kind with those which we perceive in the affections of sympathy, sorrow, and what we call pleasing melancholy. Those produced by the more lively and elevating airs, appear to be of a like species with those effected by the sentiments of joy, hope, or other exhilarating passions. And those which proceed from the solemn and grave, indicate a nature similar to the impressions of veneration and awe. Now, in this similarity it is, that the foundation is laid in our nature for the moral operation of external harmony.' This is the language of nature and common sense. It is the language of those native and necessary feelings and perceptions which arise from the very constitution of our frame. Hence it is natural for us to celebrate the perfections of God and redeeming love in songs of praise.—

With respect to tunes I would observe that they should be adapted to the subject. When the heart is surcharged with sorrow and grief, it will vent itself in language which requires a tune of plaintive or mournful airs. When the subject is joy and hope, the tune should be lively and quick. When the subject is grand and sublime, the tune should be slow and grave. Hence the necessity of various tunes. It would be absurd to sing a mournful tune, which would make us feel melancholy, when we sing of the joys and blessedness of the upper world. So on the other hand, it would be preposterous to sing a lively tune, when

the misery of the damned is the subject. If therefore you would answer the design of music, it must be cultivated, and your tunes must be adapted to the subjects. It is a great reflection on christians that this branch of divine worship is so frequently performed, in such an ungraceful, and I may add, irreligious manner. Many of them are dissatisfied if they do not hear good sermons and good prayers. But alas when they address the Great God in songs of praise, they appear wholly indifferent how this part of divine worship is performed. If they can make a noise it is sufficient, though it is as far from music, as the heavens are distant from the earth. I would therefore seriously urge you to cultivate the art of music, so as to be able to praise God in a becoming manner.

In regard to reading the psalm line by line prior to the singing of it, I would observe; that this practice arose in time of ignorance. It was by no means approved of by the Westminster Assembly. They adapted it as a convenience for some of their churches which contained many persons who could not read. The practice of reading the line is a disgrace to any American church. It implies that the people are too ignorant to read for themselves. And will they, in the present age of knowledge, when education is so easily obtained, lie under the imputation. Let the practice be universally dismissed from the American churches, and let them all be well furnished with books. Let the ignorant learn to read.

I hasten to close with a few inferences from what precedes.

1. The power of prejudice is great.

'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth,' was a question of *prejudice*. The language and conduct of many in the present day, demand, can there be any good thing either in doctrine, or worship, or discipline, except among ourselves? I do not know any subject, concerning which there appears stronger prejudice and bigotry, than that of gospel psalmody. The apostles sang evangelical songs. Such were the songs of succeeding christians in many churches, till the middle of the fourth, and in some till the eighth century.

How David's psalms were introduced I have already observed. And when they come from the pen of a Watts, in the language of the new testament, they are well adapted to divine worship in gospel churches.

But in this dress they are strenuously opposed. In jewish garments they are advocated. At the foundation I can perceive nothing but prejudice.

David's psalms are not sung by those who advocate them, neither in their native form, nor in their proper translation. Rouse's

version of them is used, which has, insiduously imposed upon it, the title of David's psalms. And when these friends to David speak against Doctor Watts, they set David's psalms in opposition to the Doctor's version of them. This is sophistry, if not prevarication. By this mean many ignorant people are induced to believe, that the version of Rouse, in its present form, was the production of David under divine inspiration.

To state the case fairly, they should draw a contrast between the version of Doctor Watts, and that of Mr. Rouse, and shew which is the best adapted to the gospel dispensation. This I have attempted, in the present discourse.

2. We may learn the necessity of a careful examination of any subject that comes into view.

The subject of psalmody has been much disguised. And it has, in all its fictitious dress, been received by many without any proper reflection. I desire no person to be led, by the enchanted chord of implicit faith, to embrace what I have advanced upon this subject. If it will not bear a candid investigation, and appear amply supported, let it be rejected. Make the trial, and you will come to the knowledge of the truth. Examine the subject thoroughly with an unprejudiced mind, and you will discover what system of psalmody is the best calculated for the worship of God in christian churches. I have fully given my opinion. If other christians differ, in judgment from me, I have no objection. Let every one act agreeably to scripture, and the dictates of an enlightened, unprejudiced, and good conscience. In this discourse I aim chiefly at a vindication of the system of psalmody which our church has adopted, from the aspersions which are unjustly cast upon it. Had not some of our brethren, in the Seceding church, been so loud in their clamors against Doctor Watts' version of psalms, and so high in commendation of that of Mr. Rouse, I should not have entered on the discussion of this subject. And I have not examined the subject, so much with a view to refute what has been alledged against Watts; as to illustrate the doctrine of psalmody generally, and to confirm our own people in the use of the system which they have chosen. And I should not have said a word against the version of Rouse, had it not been generally used in our churches in times past, and still retained in use by some of them. I now commit this discourse to the disposal of the great head of the church. To promote his glory and spiritual kingdom it was composed. For these ends it is with humility submitted to public examination.

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