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McMaster's Apology

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in
Christian Psalmody

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THE REV. EZRA STILES ELY, D. D.

OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA.

“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God; he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.”

VOL. II.

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ARTICLE III.—*An Apology for the Book of Psalms, in Five Letters; addressed to the Friends of Union in the Churches of God.* By Gilbert M^r Master, A. M. Ballston-Spa, 1818, pp. 180. 12mo.*

An Apology for the Book of Psalms! Pray, who can need an *Apology* for that divinely inspired book? Surely no Christian; no friend to the church of God; no advocate for *union* in that church!

What can our brother, the author, mean by his title? What is the object of his book?

Had he entitled it, *An Apology for using Rouse's Paraphrase of the Book of Psalms in public worship*, we should have understood him at once. Had he written *An Apology for using some version of the Book of Psalms, exclusively, in singing the praises of God in the church*, it

* As it is one design of our Review to take notice of respectable American publications, especially in theology, we will here state, that the writer of this *Apology* has lately favoured the Christian public with two other works, which do him more credit, and will probably do the church more good, than the production now under our eye. The first of these is entitled, *An Essay in defence of some Fundamental Doctrines of Christianity; including a Review of the Writings of Elias Smith.* 1815, pp. 120. 8vo. In this Essay, according to his intention, the author has ably stated and defended "the truths of scripture, in opposition to the following errors," of the *Smithites*, or *Plummerites*, self-styled *Christ-i-ans*; viz.

"1. That the doctrine of the Trinity is a fable. 2. That Jesus Christ is no more than a man. 3. That the Holy Spirit is only an influence or operation. 4. That the soul is mortal. 5. That Adam's fall, original sin, the covenant of grace, the incarnation of Christ, are fables. 6. That the death of Christ was not intended to reconcile God to man,—that the atonement is for all men,—that the guilt of sin was not imputed to Christ,—that he suffered only as an example. 7. That the wicked shall be annihilated. 8. That females have a right to be public teachers of religion," &c. Smith and his adherents have generally been thought too contemptible as men and teachers, to deserve attention, or require opposition; but they have multiplied, sent forth their apostles, built churches, and deluded many. No error calculated to destroy the souls of men is unworthy of exposure and refutation. Mr. M^r M. deserves our gratitude for attempting seriously to write against a pernicious heresy, which others have answered only with a *sneer* or some expression of abhorrence.

The other work of the same author, is a very correct exhibition of the doctrines of Christianity under the title of "*The Shorter Catechism Analyzed.*" We do not know a better manual of systematic theology than this.

would have been a correct exhibition of the general spirit of his treatise.

Those Christians who employ other sacred hymns than those called *versions* of the Psalms of David, admit as fully as our author, that the book of Psalms is a very important, spiritual, and highly useful portion of the divinely inspired Scriptures, which ought to be read in every religious congregation and family. We protest, therefore, against any one's writing in such manner as to imply, that we who sing sacred songs composed by Watts and other uninspired writers, discard any portion of the word of God. It is treating us unfairly. We protest also against every insinuation, that by our making solemn songs, to be used in the public or private praise of Jehovah, we attempt to *add* something to the word of the Lord. No writer of any piece of this nature, so far as we have learned, has ever wished to introduce his lines into the Bible. Did we pretend that our stanzas are divinely inspired, and ought to be received as a part of the divine oracles, we should then be exposed to *the plagues that are written*, against him who would *add* to the words of Revelation.

Let it be well understood too, that when we select some portions of the book of Psalms to be sung on any particular occasion, or statedly, in our religious assemblies, we do not thereby attempt to cast the rest of that book out of the sacred volume; nor intimate that the *whole* is not *profitable, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work*. It is unreasonable, therefore, to charge us with *taking away from the words of the prophecy of this book*; and needless to warn us, in relation to our psalmody, that it will *take away our part out of the book of life*. But it is said, that the book of Psalms was given us not only to be *read*, but also to be *sung* in our churches. Here we admit, that if a divine command can be found, which requires the particular congregations of the Lord's people to *chaunt* or *sing* the whole book of Psalms, it is a sin to disobey it; but where is the injunction to be found? Mr. M'M. has not produced it. Some of the Psalms were indited for, and their titles show that they were required to be sung on, *particular occasions*; and although they may be read with profit, yet without some

accommodation they would not be suited to any other circumstances. These occasional psalms, nevertheless, furnish much matter, which in truly scriptural language, may be adapted by a slight paraphrase, to people under thousands of different circumstances. It would have been strange, then, if all Christians had been required to sing literal translations of all the divinely inspired Psalms, and nothing else: but could such a requisition be found in all the Bible, we would henceforth renounce all other songs in the worship of the Most High.

It shall be granted at once, that either a literal translation, or a paraphrase, of all the Psalms may be made, which might be sung in every Christian church; and that it would be undesirable and inexpedient to banish the book of inspired Psalms, from our system of Psalmody. Never would we willingly see the Psalms of David supplanted.

It shall be granted too, that it would be desirable to have a metrical translation of the Psalms, as nearly expressive of the sense of the original, as may be practicable, considering the different idioms of Hebrew and English poetry. Indeed, it would delight us to obtain a sort of blank verse translation of the book of Psalms, in which there should be found the spirit of the inspired penmen, without the trammels of rhyme. It was the folly of attempting to make the ends of the lines sound alike in a version of the original, that rendered the psalms of Rouse so utterly unlike any other species of composition in our language. The Latins, Greeks, and Hebrews were accustomed, from the structure of their languages, to inversions; but to bring out *he & be, we & me*, and a few other chimes, a considerable portion of the verses must be distorted, and the sentences advance wrong end foremost. Take an example.

"I also am a vile reproach
Unto them made to be;
And they that did upon me look,
Did shake their heads at me."—Ps. cix. 25.

The prose translation is natural. "I became also a reproach unto them: when they looked upon me they shook their heads."

A version without rhyme might be metrical, poetical, and nearly literal; but if the lines must terminate in simi-

lar sounds, then we may expect either such imitations and paraphrases as Dr. Watts has given, or such uncouth verse as Rouse, and nothing better.

With equal freedom, we concede, moreover, that Dr. Watts and others have written many unguarded sentences concerning David and some of the Psalms, which we disapprove as sincerely as Mr. M. M. can do: for there is no need of an apology for the prophetic denunciations against the wicked, which David sung; nor should it be ever figuratively said, that there is occasion for the efforts of Dr. Watts to *convert David into a Christian*.

Having premised these things, we are now prepared to follow our author through his train of thought, exhibited in the *Letters* before us.

In Letter I. he remarks, that “psalmody, in its matter and forms, has always claimed, and deservedly obtained, no small share of Christian attention:”—that “every faculty of man should be consecrated to the service of his Creator:”—that sentiment accompanied by the fascinations of music, has such powerful influence over the human mind, that great circumspection should be used to prevent the singing of false doctrines:*—that the social singing of praise is an ordinance of God, established by positive precept, and confirmed by the example of Christ and his apostles:—that the church of Christ is *really* one, and ought to maintain *a visible unity* in her doctrines, and so far as is practicable, in her modes of worship:—that the matter of our songs must be evangelical, and such as God approves:—and that no portion of the church should needlessly “wound the sensibilities of the meanest among the children of grace.” To all this we subscribe a solemn AMEN. He writes nobly, when he adds, “The sons of Zion are friends to truth; children of the same family, they touch with freedom each other’s mistakes, they reprove with an affectionate heart, and love as brethren still. Differences can never be removed unless they occupy a share of thought, and find a place in free and meek discus-

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

sion. Discussion, to rise above chicanery, must be plain ; to be useful, it must be meek."

Now the difference between Mr. M'M. and ourselves, so far as it relates to Letter I. is principally this ; he would have us avoid wounding the few Reformed, and Associate Reformed, and Associate Presbyterians, in the United States, by banishing all our psalms and hymns, commonly used, from places of public worship, and restoring the Psalms of David as versified by Rouse ; while we would have them use such a selection of Psalms as they think best, and be contented that we should do the same. He seems to think that they do *well*, and we, that they do *ill*, to be offended at our exercise of Christian liberty in this matter. When we meet in religious assemblies, with our brethren, who think the version of Rouse the best extant, we unite with them in the use of those songs of praise, and should be glad to have them reciprocate the condescension, when we sing what they judge to be evangelical sentiments, in our congregations. We would not take away Rouse from them, nor have them wrest Watts from us. We are ready, moreover, to give them a pledge, that when they will prepare a better selection of scriptural psalms and hymns than any now in use ; we will adopt it in conjunction with them ; and so become *one* in the use of the psalm and hymn book, as we are now one in the use of the Bible, and substantially in all the doctrines of grace and government.

But it is demanded, "Why then rend in pieces the body of Christ?" We answer, that we would not rend, but promote unity ; by allowing each visible section of the church to judge for itself, in relation to its own psalmody ; and would still hold not only Christian, but ecclesiastical fellowship with them, so long as they do not adopt sentiments inconsistent with the continuance of such fellowship. We cannot see how, or why, it should rend the Presbyterian church in this country, for one congregation to sing evangelical sentiments from one book, while others sing the same sentiments from another ; any more than for Mr. M'Master's congregation to sing the *fiftieth* psalm in Rouse, on the same Lord's day in which Dr. Wylie's people of the same denomination, shall sing the *hundred and fiftieth*.

But granting it is *lawful* for us to use the versifications of Watts, is it *expedient*? *Take heed*, says our author, in the language of inspiration, *lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak. When ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.* p. 11. We might turn the tables, and say, "Do you, who are few in number, when compared with the Christian brethren from whom you differ, take heed that you do not wound and grieve multitudes, by your strenuous attachment to your favourite version, and by your unreasonable opposition to evangelical, useful hymns, which have edified thousands, and tens of thousands of the people of God. In a matter of *expediency*, the few should yield their prejudices and prepossessions to the judgment of the many. The general sentiment of the great body of the church of Christ in the world, should not be sacrificed, in such a concern, to the sentiment of a small minority."

Let us not, however, misunderstand, and misapply divine injunctions. If our brother is, in a modern sense, *offended* at our *eating meat*, we will continue to eat it, so long as we judge it to be expedient; but if our *eating meat cause our brother to sin*, that is, in a scriptural acceptance *offend him, we will not eat meat while the world stands*. Eating in an idol's temple did thus cause some to commit idolatry; and so the Apostle would have Christians abstain from eating of sacrifices, offered to idols, even while they knew that *an idol is nothing*. Some brethren had *weak consciences*, that were liable to be easily perverted and injured; and therefore, it was a duty to avoid all such practices, however lawful in themselves, as were calculated to make a new convert's conscience approve of idolatrous services. A *stumbling block*, in a scriptural sense, is something which causes one to stumble in his moral walk; something which occasions one to commit sin. Now should our Scotch brethren sing with us, from the influence of our example, we have no fear that they would, in so doing, offend God, or sin against their fellow men. We have no fear, that our psalms and hymns will prove, in a scriptural sense, a *stumbling block* to any man, however weak in conscience. Unreasonably *offended* or *displeased*

at us, for using the songs of praise, which we deem most profitable, our brethren may be; but we cannot help it.

We lift up a warning voice, and say to all who choose to sing Rouse's Psalms, take heed not to make the liberty which you enjoy, and which we cheerfully accord to you, an occasion of disunion in the family of Christ. We are brethren; we love you; and expect your religious friendship in return. We may unite in the same presbyteries, synods, and other assemblies, since we agree in the doctrines of grace, and mode of church government; while we have some variety in our psalmody; such as now subsists, without any unpleasant consequences, among many congregations represented in the same General Assembly. "In moments of devout reflection, the man of piety will approve of that course, which on proper ground, most effectually tends to unite the followers of the Lamb." Let not a little difference in the matter of psalmody, provided the fundamental doctrines of Christianity be prominent in the system adopted by each particular church, be a ground of separation. Come and unite with us, in every thing else; and you may sing *Rouse for aye*. "Will you, then, can you, ye friends of concord, refuse this?" p. 16.

Letter II. is on the "ancient history of Psalmody." In this our author examines the representations of the Rev. Dr. James Latta, and of Messrs. Freeman and Baird. We have on the table before us,

1. *A Discourse on Psalmody*; by Dr. Latta, printed in 1794, pp. 146, 8vo.

2. *A Discourse on Psalmody, delivered at Newburgh, before the Presbytery of Hudson, Sept. 1801, by Jonathan Freeman, A. M. V. D. M. Newburgh 1801, pp. 31, 8vo.*

3. *Science of Praise, or an Illustration of the Nature and Design of Sacred Psalmody, &c. By T. D. Baird, Minister of the Gospel, Newark, Ohio. Zanesville, 1816, pp. 108, 12mo.*

4. *Plain Reasons why neither Dr. Watts' Imitations of the Psalms, nor his other Poems, nor any other human composition, ought to be used in the praises of the great God our Saviour,—but that a metre version of the book of Psalms, examined with wise and critical care, by pious and learned divines, and found by them to be as near the Hebrew metre Psalms as the idiom of the English language would admit, ought to be used. By Thomas Clark, V. D. M. Albany, 1783, pp. 33, 12mo.*

5. *An Essay on Psalmody, and the Preface to the Psalms of*

David Imitated, by Dr. Watts, in vol. ix. of his *Works*. Leeds edition.

6. *Vindiciæ Cantatus Dominici, &c.* By the Rev. John Anderson, 1800, pp. 403, 12mo.

Messrs. Freeman and Baird are represented by Mr. M. M. as *copyists of Dr. Latta*. We have had the opportunity of comparing them with him: and we give our judgment, that they are inferior to him; but no more like him, than the author of the *Apology* is like the writer of *Plain Reasons*. Yet we cannot affirm, that Mr. M. M. ever read the Letters of Mr. Clark. This last writer contends, that the use of human compositions in praising God is "I. unwarrantable; II. superfluous, if not superstitious; III. hurtful to the peace of the church, and offensive to God's people; IV. conniving with the reproaches of the book of Psalms; and V. dangerously exposing ourselves to the curses of God." He comes finally to this conclusion, "that we ought to use God's own book of Psalms, in praising his name,—1. Because *God commanded us to praise his name with the words of David and Asaph*, 2 Chron. xxix. 30 —2. Because in using it we *follow the pious example of the flock of Christ*.—3. Because *it best suits the various cases of Christians' souls in our times*, and is most for edification."*

Our remarks in reply to the *Apology* will equally serve for its predecessors, the little volume of *Plain Reasons*, and

* "But say you, such is the excellence and perfection of the Psalms of David, they are so well suited to the case of every Christian, and they give such clear discoveries of the Gospel, that it would be arrogance and presumption to deviate from them, or to pretend to add any thing to the light and advantages that may be derived from them. If this be so, why did God raise up so many prophets after David, some of them far out-shining him for gospel-light and discoveries, and why did he after all *speak to us by his own Son*? Or was there no need that he should appear as our teacher." *Latta*, p. 73. The truth is, all parts of the Bible are not of the same relative importance; as any one may know by reading "Adam, Sheth, Enosh," Chron. i. 1. when compared with John iii. 16. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." But in this controversy, all the advocates for Rouse, attach to the Psalms of David more than their relative importance; while some of the admirers of Watts have incautiously attributed to them less than is due.

Mr. Anderson's elaborate work. Dr. Watts and Dr. Latta, with Messrs. Freeman and Baird, may be set in array against the three other authors just named in this article.

The example of the primitive age of the Christian church is claimed on each side. Pliny, the younger, who was born A. D. 62, and died A. D. 113, in a letter to Trajan says, "Essent soliti stato die ante lucem convenire, carmenque Christo, quasi Deo, dicere secum invicem."* *They were wont to assemble on a stated day, before it was light, and sing a hymn together to Christ, as to God.*

"The words *dicere secum invicem*, mean no more than *to sing together*; or as Vossius explains them, 'Pliny's meaning is, that the priest was not the only person who sang; but others singing also, they stirred up one another. Whence, Tertullian, in his *Apology*, c. 39, after he had spoken of their love feasts, adds; *After we have washed our hands, and the candles are lighted, every one is desired to sing to God in the midst of the company, according as he is able, either out of the Holy Scriptures or somewhat of his own composing.*'"†

"Thus you see," says Mr. Freeman, p. 13. "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."

Mr. M^cMasters comes to a different conclusion. "If those Christians," says he, "sung the forty-fifth Psalm, they must literally have addressed Christ as God. Compare verses 1—9, with Heb. i. 8, 9, and this will be evident. —Or had they sung a portion of the cii. Psalm, would it not have been a song to Christ as God? I do not know

* Plin. Epist. xcvi. 60.

† "A Tractate on Church Music; being an extract, from the Rev. and learned Mr. Pierce's Vindication of the Dissenters." Lond. 1786.

what our modern *hymnologists* would think of these; but certain I am, the apostle Paul did believe them, as well as many others, to be odes to Christ." True, Mr. M'M. you know, and we know, and Paul knew, that these Psalms refer to Christ; but was Pliny likely to know all this? Because we know the divinely explained meaning of these Psalms, it is not fair to infer that Pliny did. Had he heard of Christians singing only these, and other portions of the Hebrew psalms, he would have concluded that they were all Jews. The Hebrews, who rejected Christ, sang these very Psalms, and neither Pliny nor any of the unconverted Jews, thought they were singing songs of praise to Jesus Christ as God. None of the psalms of the Old Testament expressly mention the name of Christ, and had not the Christians expressly sung his name with ascriptions of divine honours to him, Pliny would have thought no more of their mode of worship, than of that uniformly practised in a Jewish synagogue. It seems to us, therefore, to be the most natural conclusion from the letter of Pliny to Trajan, that the Christians of his day actually sang songs of praise to Jesus, of human composition. It is an inference quite too far fetched for Pliny, that "if they sung the forty-fifth, forty-seventh, sixty-eighth, &c. Psalms, they were singing hymns to Christ as God." This would not have distinguished them from Jews. The same remark applies to several passages adduced by Dr. Latta from the fathers, in which they testify that the early Christians sung, not the Psalms sung by the Hebrews in the temple and synagogue, but hymns of praise directly addressed to Christ by name. In his appeal to the fathers Dr. Latta certainly has the advantage of all his opponents.

The other passages adduced from ancient historians by Dr. Latta, Mr. Freeman and others, on his side of the question, appear to us to prove very little, if any thing, more than this, that has just been considered. They merely corroborate the testimony of Pliny. It is clear also, that the writings cited by Mr. M'M. to prove, that some of the psalms of David and Asaph were sung by the primitive Christians, can never evince, that they sung nothing else in their public assemblies. The Bible, after all, and not any uninspired history of the practice of any age; not even of that of the apostles

themselves; is the statute book of Christians. The Bible is the only allowed rule of the faith and practice of Protestants. If the Bible has required us to sing nothing else but the inspired book of Psalms, then we will sing nothing else; for what the Bible requires is a duty; and what it does not forbid, it permits. This is a peculiar attribute of divine law.

In Letter III. of the *Apology*, we have the "modern history of Psalmody," which however correct, or incorrect, can as little claim to be law on this subject, as ancient history. In the middle ages, the purest section of the church of God, in the valleys of Piedmont, we are informed, sung the psalms of scripture. "The Albigenses, in 1210, were metre psalm singers." p. 53. The Reformers too, sung scripture songs, in Germany, France, England, and Scotland.

"Luther, as early as the year 1525, published a metre version of the psalms. In the same year at Augsburg, was published a poetic translation of the whole book, by another hand. In the year 1543, under the auspices of Calvin, fifty of the psalms, translated into verse by *Marmot*, a refugee from papal persecution, were printed at Geneva. Marmot died shortly after this, and *Beza*, the devout, learned, and polished companion of Calvin, versified the remainder. The whole book, thus versified, was in a few years published. In England, the friends of reform were also the friends of the Bible psalms. For their use, several of them were turned into metre by *Wyatt* and others; but a full version was not obtained, till after the accession of Elizabeth. The year 1562 presented that by *Sternhold, Hopkins, Cox, Norton, &c.* This was used in the church of England, till superseded by the more imperfect version of *Tate and Brady*, in A. D. 1696.—In the Scottish church the reformers, from the first, practised psalmody. It is said they sung the Book of Psalms in prose; the form, perhaps, in which it should still be used. Before A. D. 1546, there is no authentic account of any use of metred psalms in that church; but both before and after that period, in one form or another, the book of Psalms was uniformly employed in their congregations. In A. D. 1556, versified psalms were commonly sung in their assemblies. The whole book of psalms, however, was not put into measure before 1559; from which period a version, first published at Geneva, was authorised, till superseded by that still used in the church of Scotland." *M. M.'s. Apology.* p. 54. 57.

We shall here introduce a little piece of history, relative to psalmody in the church of Scotland, which will prove, that the *version* of Rouse was deemed a *paraphrase*, and not a *translation*; and that other sacred songs than those contained in the book of Psalms, are admitted by this ancient body of Presbyterians.

“By the Act of Assembly, Aug. 6th, 1649, their Commission being impowered to emit the Paraphrase of the Psalms, and establish the same for public use, they did accordingly conclude and establish the Paraphrase of the Psalms in metre, now used in this church, after the Presbyteries had sent their animadversions thereupon. In the 38th Sess. of Assem. 1648, there is an act for examining the labours of Mr. Zachary Boyd, upon the other Scripture-Songs. And by Assem. 1706, Sess. 4. the Scripture-Songs by Mr. Patrick Sympson, Minister at Renfrew, are recommended to be used in private families: and in order to prepare them for the public use of the church, this was renewed, Assem. 1707, and by the 15th Act of Assem. 1708, their Commission is instructed and appointed to consider the printed version of the Scripture-Songs with the remarks of Presbyteries thereupon, and after examination thereof, they are authorized and empowered to conclude and emit the same, for the public use of the church: the present version of the Psalms having been ordered in the same manner, in the year 1649.” *Stewart's Collections, Book ii. Title i. Sec. 25, 27.*

These Scripture-Songs have ever since continued in use; so that the authority of the church of Scotland may be cited in favour of singing *hymns*, as distinguished from *psalms*, according to the modern use of those words.

The version, of which the ground work was laid by Sir Thomas Rouse, but which was improved by the Westminster Assembly, and the General Assembly of Scotland, was formerly used by all the Congregational and Presbyterian churches in the United States.

In 1718, Dr. Isaac Watts published in England “the Psalms of David, imitated, in the language of the New Testament.” The dissenters soon began to receive and use them in Great Britain, and the Congregationalists in New England followed their example. After them, the Presbyterians in America, with the exception of a few in number, allowed all to use the psalms and hymns of Dr. Watts who may think it proper. The General Assembly

in the United States at present allows each church under its care to sing the old version, or the imitation by Watts, or the improved version of psalms, and a selection of hymns, prepared by the late excellent Dr. Dwight, according to the option of each minister, session and people. This state of things in our portion of the church, Mr. M'M. considers as deplorable, and he censures our Supreme Judicature as having judicially decided, that a human composure is "more fit for Christian worship, than a correct version of the inspired psalms." p. 61. Here our author proceeds, as he does elsewhere, upon the assumption, that the lines of Rouse were written by divine inspiration; and that we prefer the *composure* of man to the writings of inspiration, because we allow our congregations to sing Watts, Rouse, and Dwight, without excluding any one of them. He tells us, that in opposition to the General Assembly, "the Associate, the Associate Reformed, and Reformed Presbyterian churches, were all conspicuous in defence of inspired psalms and hymns, as suitable to the worship of the church of God."

The Associate Reformed Church, in a judicial act declared,—“Nor shall any composesures, *merely human*, be sung in any of the associate reformed churches.” Yet, to the great regret of our author, this church in 1816, “Resolved, that the version of the book of Psalms, in the Old Testament, recently prepared for the use of the reformed Dutch church in America, be permitted to be used.” We cannot think, however, that our brethren of the Associate Reformed connexion, now sing *any composesures merely human*, any more than the chaunters of Rouse; for the version used by the Reformed Dutch connexion is scriptural and evangelical. It is true, the venerable Doctor Livingston, who prepared the version in question, is no poet; but as a divine, no man in America ever, upon the whole, excelled him; and where he has mangled the poetry of Watts, he has improved the theology, and in roughness of versification approximates Rouse, so that Mr. M'M. ought to be gratified by his alterations, and retract his remarks concerning the “*mutilated imitations* of the psalms,” adopted by “the immobility of the church of Holland.” p. 68.

This modern history, we acknowledge, furnishes nothing

decisive on the controversy about psalmody ; but were we to deduce any inferences, certainly they would be those of Mr. Freeman.

“ 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.”— “ The assembly also published and recommended a number of poems from Watts, whom they stile the pious and ingenious 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.” Disc. p. 21.

Mr. M’Masters himself admits, from a “ review of the church’s history, ancient and modern,” “ that human composures existed, and in some sections of the Christian commonwealth, had a place beside inspired composures. But their existence and use, neither prove nor disprove a divine appointment. The fact must be settled by other evidence, than the practice of either ancient or modern days.” p. 70. So say we, and pass to

Letter IV. in which he proposes to discuss “ the following question : *Ought the Book of Psalms to be used still, in the public service of the church ?*” We answer the question in the affirmative, instantly, for the book of Psalms is a part of the Bible, and ought to be read and expounded in the church, as a minister may have time and opportunity to do it. It is strange that our author should think *the issue of the controversy depends on the determination of this question.* We might even answer, that the book of Psalms ought still to be used *in the psalmody* of the church ; and yet not imply, that we ought to sing a literal translation of the whole, without paraphrase or comment, if we could. Some portions of the Psalms relate to peculiar Jewish ceremonies, which have ceased, and although they may be read and explained, and applied with great

propriety; yet if we would use them as a song of praise suited to our circumstances, we must accommodate them to the nature of our worship; and by *sacrifices* mean, not what the Psalmist originally did, but religious exercises in general. Will M'M. say, that we ought to sing every portion of the book of Psalms with the original meaning, unless we add, to make it historical cantation, *David sung, saying?* "I'll bring burnt-offerings to thy house.—

"Burnt sacrifices of fat rams
With incense I will bring;
Of bullocks and of goats I will
Present an offering." Ps. lxxvi. 13.

We might convert the verse into history, and then celebrate the example of the pious in ancient times; or we may attach spiritual ideas to the words, which they do not naturally convey, and by *fat rams, bullocks, and goats sacrificed*, mean when we sing, by a mental accommodation, *liberal donations to the poor, ardent prayers, and songs of thanksgiving.*

"The inquiry, then, is not whether it be lawful to use, in the praises of God, any other inspired song, besides what are found in the book of Psalms. This, so far as I know, has never been a matter of contention." p. 75. It is granted then, that we may with propriety sing any *inspired* song; or a *translation* of any poetical part of the Bible: and we would wish no hymns, no spiritual songs, which have not some portion of revealed truth for the matter of them. But must we sing nothing but a translation, or the original Hebrew and Greek? May we not sing a *paraphrase* or *commentary*, which is perfectly consistent with biblical truth? If Mr. M'M. will indulge us in this liberty, we ask no more, for the introduction of any scriptural and truly evangelical ode. "The question at issue is, Shall we have *any version* of this divine book, as the matter of our praise?" p. 75. Yes, we will have the best metrical *version* of the book of Psalms in our churches which we can find, as a very important part, but not the exclusive matter of our praise; for we may versify any *inspired song*, contained in the Holy Scriptures. But what is a *version*?

Not always a literal *translation*. A *version* may be very free, and yet give you the spirit of the original, whence it is made, more perfectly than a translation, corresponding word for word, could possibly do. Again, if we may sing a version of one of the psalms of David, and a version of the song of the angels at the advent of the Messiah, is it any crime to sing a hymn composed from a version of both combined? Surely, if it is no sin to sing these separately, we may sing them when combined, as Watts has combined many of the psalms with poetical portions of the New Testament.

But, *The Book of Psalms is actually excluded from the psalmody of their churches*, says our opponent, with emphasis. Not quite, dear sir! We sing versions of many parts of that blessed book, and would gladly sing either a version of, or a paraphrase on, every part; especially if you would suffer us to mingle in the song such expressions from other parts of the Bible as tend to expound or apply the original psalm. *Rouse's version*, we admit, is excluded from most of our churches; but we are not of the people who believe David and Asaph to have made the very book which Rouse made. This version Mr. M'M. believes is the best extant. p. 76. It is, indeed, a sort of a version of the whole book, but in our judgment, many scattered versions of different parts of the Psalms may be found which far excel the corresponding parts of Rouse. Why then not sing these superior versions of several of the psalms, and take Rouse for the portions which better writers have neglected?

The fundamental proposition of the *Apology* is, that *a correct version of the Book of Psalms, should be employed in the psalmody of the church of God.* p. 77.* To this

* The Rev. Mr. Anderson has given us a tedious, but thorough-going work. He states, "that there are portions of scripture peculiarly adapted" to psalmody. Granted. Next he asserts, that the "psalms were given to the church as forms of psalmody, and not as patterns after which other forms were to be composed for being used in solemn worship." This proposition he has not proved to be true. He has merely shown that some of the psalms were directed to be sung in the temple on particular occasions by the chief musician, and that Hezekiah exercised his authority in requiring the Levites to sing praise to

we have no objection, if we are allowed to exercise our discretion in selecting the portions of this version to be publicly sung, and if it is not intended to exclude other evangelical songs, compiled from different passages of the Bible, and expressive of the works of creation, providence, and grace. It seems, however, to be the intention

the Lord, in the words of David and Asaph. His third proposition is, "that the inspired forms of psalmody were given to be sung in the public and solemn worship of the church, *to the end of the world.*" This is coming to the point. Now, if he can support this proposition; and prove in addition, that the church may lawfully sing nothing else, the work is done, the controversy ended. But Mr. A. finds it much easier to make formal and logical statements, than to support them by any other evidence than his own affirmation. The inspired penmen of the Psalms intimate, he says, that the church was to sing their psalms to the end of time, for David says, *I will praise thy name for ever and ever.* Wondrous argument! We judge that David is now praising God in Heaven, and will continue to do it; not exclusively, however, in the words he used on earth: therefore, (logic! logic!) all Christians, to the end of time, ought to sing nothing else but the words of David and Asaph. The rest of his evidence is thus stated; "whatever form of worship God hath appointed, ought to be observed till the end of time; unless he himself intimate, that it is only temporary, and to be abrogated at a certain period. It cannot be denied, that he once appointed his church to sing his praise in the words of David and Asaph. And where have we any intimation of his will that the church should cease to do so before the end of time?" p. 16. Q. E. D.! He should have first proved, that God appointed the singing of the Psalms of David as a mode of worship *to all mankind*, before he could have reasonably inferred, that in this mode all men ought to sing praise to God *to the end of time.* He should have proved also, that none of the Psalms contained in the Bible, were explicitly given to be sung by a particular people, at special seasons. But he has done neither of these things; nor can he, so long as we read such prefaces to some of the Psalms as this:—*A psalm of David, who spake unto the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord delivered him from all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul; and he said, &c. Thou hast given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might destroy them that hate thee.* Ps. xviii. 40. To justify himself in singing the original psalms in a Christian assembly, in a literal translation, Mr. A. admits that some passages must be sung with mental reservations and restrictions. "We answer candidly, that the principles we proceed upon in singing such passages in the psalms, are chiefly these two: First, that in this part of solemn worship, it is warrantable, to consider many passages which we sing as the words of others, and as expressive of their case, not of our own. Secondly, that some of these passages may be considered as examples of a common figure of speech, whereby an individual, or particular, represents a whole species

of our champion of Rouse, that the best version of *the Book of Psalms alone, should be employed in the psalmody of the church.* The proposition above quoted, he vindicates,

“On the ground of divine appointment,—on the ground of the suitability of this book,—of its superior excellence, above all human composites,—of the uncertainty of the divine permission of such human composites,—of the unsatisfactory nature of the arguments used, to recommend them,—and the dangerous consequences of their introduction into the public worship of the church.” p. 78.

If God has appointed the whole book of psalms to be sung publicly by his church, in all ages; and has forbidden his people to sing any thing else, then the controversy is settled at once. We deny that there is any such divine appointment, and prohibition. Let any one who takes the affirmative produce them. Mr. M'M. has failed to produce proof of the appointment; and has not attempted to adduce any prohibition. He judiciously declines resting “the proof of the divine institution of these sacred odes, as the matter of the church’s psalmody, on the simple fact of a reforming king of Judah commanding that they should be employed;” 2 Chron. xxix. 30; while Mr. Clark considers that passage as *clear* evidence of our duty on this subject. “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.” With Mr. Baird, p. 52,

“We may be permitted to express our surprise, that ever this text has been *strained* to the purpose for which it has been so frequently applied. And were it not so common to make Scripture speak any language which prejudice or fancy dictates, we should have thought it impossible. The command of He-
 or kind.” p. 23. And so we are to sing *figuratively* and mean,—*not* what we say, in addressing praise to God! For instance, in the lix. Ps. *to the chief musician, when Saul sent and watched the house to kill David*, we are to sing,

“In wrath consume them, them consume,
 That so they may not be;”

and we are to add in thought, “we mean not so, Lord; but David did;” when he prophetically declared the destruction of his enemies.

zekiah and the princes, who assisted him on that occasion, may be fully understood by adverting to the usual mode of conducting worship in our own day. The person who conducts worship, directs the person who leads the music to the psalm or hymn he desires to be sung. In that way, and in no other, did Hezekiah command the Levites, who were singers, to use the words of David and Asaph. That it was not designed as a command for future generations, and especially for the gospel day, is obvious; for, if they intended the command as perpetually binding, all the psalms of Heman, Ethan, and Jethuthan, and others, must be excluded; as they were not the words of David and Asaph."

In the Christian dispensation of the covenant of grace, there are no *Levites* to be still bound by the command of Hezekiah; nor have we, with the exception of a few converted Jews, and some learned divines, any who have sufficient knowledge of the Hebrew language to *sing the words* of David and Asaph; for should we sing a literal translation of them, we should only sing in *our own words* the sentiments of those pious psalmists. In this way we answer the assertion of Mr. Clark, which Mr. M'M. has expounded, p. 81, that

"Other books of divine Revelation are given us to be *read* and to be *meditated* upon, but the Book of Psalms is given us that we may not only *read* it and *meditate* on it, but *sing* it also, with the spirit and understanding, with devout fervour and divine delight, in the assemblies of his saints, on his holy sabbaths, as well as in private families." *P. R. p. 15.*

The Hebrew Psalms, in their original state, are suited to the purpose of public singing, in a congregation that can read the poetry of David; but surely the Hebrew Psalms in metre are not given to an English congregation to be sung; nor has God given any English translation of those psalms in metre, to be either *read* or *sung*.

In support of a *divine appointment* for the continued use of the Book of Psalms, Mr. M'M. and Mr. Anderson allege, that Jesus and his disciples sung, "after the eucharistic supper, a portion of that part of the book of psalms, called the *Hallel*, by the Jews," which is composed of Psalms 113 to 118 inclusive. The Bible has recorded no such fact for our example. But what if they did? They were Jews, and could understand the original poetry,

which was adapted to music. But while we are commanded to sing, we are not required to sing the same words which they did, any more than the same air. After supper, the Lord and his disciples, we are told, *sang an hymn*; but we are not informed what particular hymn by the author of the inspired oracles, because, no doubt, he did not deem it a matter of importance.

The author of the *Apology* further urges what he calls "New Testament authority." *Is any merry? Let him sing psalms.* Jam. v. 13. This, however, proves nothing more than that a person who is merry ought to sing psalms of a pious and evangelical kind, composed by some one: but whether David, Asaph, Rouse, or Watts, the apostle does not say. *Is any merry? Let him sing psalms*, composed by any writer who celebrates the praises of Jehovah in the language of truth. If James had said, let him sing THE PSALMS, he would have referred to some then extant; or had he said *the Psalms of David*, it would have been an explicit command to use them; but no prohibition against the use of other forms of sound words, expressive of gratitude and love.

The last scriptural proof of a divine appointment of the Book of Psalms, to be sung in all particular churches, which Mr. M'M. cites, is Col. iii. 16. *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.* In the Book of Psalms, says our author, (and Mr. Anderson had told the same story before him, p. 36,) are

* How easily might the apostle have said, *teaching and admonishing one another out of THE BOOK OF PSALMS*, and nothing more, had that been his meaning! "The psalms of David are never referred to in the New Testament, but in a manner so direct and express, that they cannot be mistaken. Thus Luke xx. 42, *David himself saith in the Book of Psalms, &c.* And our Lord says, Luke xxiv. 44. *All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me.* The like may be observed of all the other instances in which the Psalms of David are quoted; as Acts i. 20—and xiii. 33, 35. If, therefore, the Psalms of David had been introduced and established among the converts at Colosse and Ephesus, no reason can be assigned why the apostle should have used such a diversity of phrase, and not have spoken of these

all these *psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs* to be found, for "his Spirit has dictated a great variety of songs, —and collected into *one Book*, for the use of the church, those he judged proper." But how does he know that Paul did not intend some of the hymns and songs contained in other portions of the Bible? Indeed, he does not; and so he comes out with an imposing demand of "evidence of the existence in the apostolic age, of any other *PSALMS and HYMNS, and SPIRITUAL SONGS, than those contained in Scripture.*" We grant, that all the pieces of *INSPIRED poetry* then recommended to be sung, were contained somewhere in the Bible; yet not in the book of psalms; but in our turn, we demand evidence, that the Holy Spirit intended the pieces suited to psalmody, which were then written, and those only when he indited the passage. We demand proof, that every human composition, consonant with the word of God, and suited from its metre to psalmody, is not included in those psalms, or hymns, or spiritual songs, with which Christians may teach and admonish one another. To every age of the church, we should suppose the passage naturally directed; that it might convey the idea of the duty of Christians to edify one another, by the right use of all evangelical songs to which they may have access, and for the singing of which they have opportunity.

Instead of supporting the cause of Mr. M'M. the passage is decidedly in favour of those who would sing para-

Psalms in the usual manner, as being familiar and well known to them. But his directing the members of these churches to the *word of Christ*, —his commanding them *to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*, —his enjoining them *to give thanks unto God and the Father, by him*, manifestly show, that the apostle had not the most distant reference to the Psalms of David. Our apostle always distinguishes *the word of Christ* from what has been spoken by David and the prophets." *Latta's Discourse*, p. 34. Still this writer allows that the whole Bible is, in a qualified sense, the word of Christ. Mr. M'M. discovers as much *virulence* against Dr. Latta, as he erroneously says Dr. L. does "against the inspired songs of Zion." We think, indeed, that the Psalms of David and Asaph, would not be so imperfect a system of psalmody, had we them in English verse, as the Doctor seems to have imagined; but it is an outrage to call him "the most confident enemy of the scripture psalms," and his book, the "thoughtless drivellings of dotage." *Apol.* p. 27, 34.

phrases, translations, or versions of David's psalms, together with any other hymns or spiritual songs, which they deem suitable in metre, savoury in spirit, and sound in doctrine. *Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs*, Mr. Clark and others inform us, are "the titles of three arrangements," or divisions of the book of Psalms. *Calmet* shows, that the Hebrews commonly divided the Psalms into *five* books, and that some of the Christian fathers admitted this division, and thought it very ancient; but of *three* divisions, denoted by the terms used in Col. iii 16, we have no evidence. Dr. Watts says,

"I think no man hath better explained the original meaning of these words than Zanchy. A psalm, *ψαλμος*, is such a song as usually is sung with other instruments besides the tongue. Hymns, *ὕμνοι*, such as are made only to express the praises, and set out the excellencies of God. Songs, *ὕμνοι*, such as contain not only praises, but exhortations, prophecies, thanksgivings, and these only sung with the voice." In "Eph. v. 19, and Col. iii. 16, it is joined with the word *spiritual*; and that seems to be used by the apostle in all his epistles, as a very distinguishing word between the law and the gospel, the Jewish and the Christian worship. The Jews had carnal ordinances, and carnal commandments, and their state and dispensation is often called *flesh*, but the church under the gospel is 'a *spiritual* house, blessed with *spiritual* blessings, endowed with *spiritual* gifts, to worship God in spirit and in truth, to offer *spiritual* sacrifices, and to sing *spiritual* songs.'" Works, vol. ix. p. 4, 5.

We grant, however, that psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs are to be found in the book of Psalms; but to these the apostle does not confine us.* Any song in which the

* Mr. Anderson attempts boldly to defend the position "That the scripture-songs are the only forms of psalmody which ought to be used in the solemn and public worship of the church." p. 34. His first argument is, *that all ways or means of worshipping God, not appointed in his word, are to be rejected:—the singing of other compositions than those which the Holy Spirit hath given us in the Scriptures, under the designation of psalms or songs, is a way or mean of worshipping God, not appointed in his word: therefore, all such singing ought to be rejected.* In reply, we allege, that God has appointed public praise, but has given no form of psalmody for his church through every age. He has given us examples of holy men, who from time to time, in his church, have composed and publicly sung songs, peculiarly suited to their own times and circumstances; and he has required Christians in all ages to edify one another, by the use of spiritual songs,

word of Christ dwells richly, so that the song being remembered, the word dwells in our minds, may be sung for the instruction and admonition of others; and should be sung with grace in our hearts, to the praise of the Lord. This appears to us to be a fair construction of the sense of the text; for there is no word nor clause, which limits the psalms, the hymns, or the spiritual songs to be sung, with gracious affections, for the edification of the saints, to those contained in the divinely inspired book of Psalms, or even in the Bible. Mr. M'M. we conclude, therefore, has not proved the *divine institution* of the book of psalms as the exclusive system of psalmody. He has not proved that God has given us a liturgy for praise, any more than for prayer; and it would have been strange had he done one without the other.

The adaptation of the Book of Psalms to the purposes of sacred praise, when suitably versified, and explained in

prescribing only that they should be consonant to, and richly replenished with *the word of Christ*.

Where does Jehovah say, "I appoint the book of Psalms to be sung by the church of God," in any age; and where does he say, that he ordains it as a system of psalmody to be used to the end of time? The fact is, God has appointed solemn psalmody; but he has no where appointed the whole form of words to be sung in any age of the church. Mr. A.'s other arguments claim not the honour of being considered as demonstrations of syllogistic importance. He tells us, as all his followers have done, that *the scripture-songs are sufficient in number and variety*, that they are of *superior excellence* to all human compositions; and that *the new scheme of using other than scripture-songs in solemn worship* is attended with *dangerous consequences*.

Mr. Anderson should have defended some such syllogisms as these, to make his cause good;

Any form of psalmody appointed to be sung by the church in all ages, should be sung in all ages:

But God hath appointed Rouse's version as a form of psalmody to be sung in all ages;

Therefore, Rouse's version should be sung in all ages of the church.

And,

It is unlawful to sing any form of words not divinely arranged;

But Watts's form of words was not divinely arranged;

Therefore, it is unlawful to sing Watts's form of words.

Again, for an Enthymeme,

Rouse's form of words was divinely arranged, in his version;

Therefore, it is lawful to sing Rouse's form of words, through all ages, of the church.

a few places, we have no disposition to dispute. Dr. Watts expresses our mind, when he says, "I esteem the book of Psalms the most valuable part of the Old Testament upon many accounts: I advise the reading and meditation of it more frequently than any single book of Scripture; and what I advise I practise. Nothing is more proper to furnish our souls with devout thoughts, and lead us into a world of spiritual experiences. The expressions of it that are not Jewish or peculiar, give us constant assistance in prayer and in praise."

We admit, in the next place, *the superior excellence of inspired psalms*, hymns, and spiritual songs, over any merely human compositions; but the book of Psalms does not contain all the inspired poetical pieces of Scripture; nor can Hebrew poetry be turned generally into corresponding English poetry, suited to the purpose of public singing, without permitting the versifier to give a free translation, and make use of scriptural paraphrase. Be it forever remembered, at the same time, that neither our prose translation, nor Rouse's version of the book of psalms, is the work of inspiration. Neither of them is a good *metrical translation*, adapted to musical recitation, in common congregations.

Mr. M'M. has not *indubitable*, but we have satisfactory *evidence of the propriety of using human compositions in the psalmody of the church*, provided those human psalms, hymns, or songs, are expressive of the truth revealed in the Holy Bible, and convey nothing contrary to the analogy of faith. The command, *Let him sing psalms*, is of as general a nature as, *Let him pray*. Neither the words of his *psalms* nor of his *prayers* are prescribed; but the Bible describes the essential characteristics of both. They must be consistent with the revealed will of God; and must be offered with devout affections of heart, in one who understands their meaning and design. Every command in the whole Bible to sing praises to the Lord, to sing psalms and hymns, and odes, might be cited to our purpose, except there is a limitation in the command, so as to confine us to divinely inspired pieces of composition.

For our justification we plead also the example of saints and angels, who sang without confining themselves to songs before on record, and were not reprov'd for so doing.

As for exposing ourselves like Nadab, Abihu, and Uzza, there is no more danger of it in selecting the matter and words of songs, than of our prayers and sermons; for we may give an unhallowed touch to the ark of God, in preaching and praying, as well as singing.

The arguments employed to set aside the book of Psalms, from its place in the psalmody of the church, may be not only unsatisfactory, but frequently impious; if they are, however, the fact does not affect the position which we take; for we would employ, as we have opportunity, the sentiments of the book of Psalms, and as literal a versification of the original divine poems of the Bible, as we can find well suited to public psalmody, or procure to be made by any individuals.

We cannot help thinking, when reading Mr. M'M. on this head, that it would have been ingenuous for him to have written, *The arguments employed to set aside ROUSE'S PARAPHRASE OF THE PSALMS, from its place in the psalmody of the church, appear to me not only unsatisfactory, but frequently impious.* Dr. Watts, whom we must say our brother M'Masters has attacked with unreasonable asperity, had no desire to exclude a poetic translation, as nearly literal as might be consistent with good taste, of the greater part of the book of psalms, from public worship: nor have we ever read a writer on the subject who was desirous of excluding an evangelical paraphrase of the songs of David from the church.

Finally, "*the evil consequences of supplying the place of scripture psalms with human compositions* furnishes a sixth reason against it." p. 118. We reply in general, that every institution, whether of God or man, is liable to abuse: and neither praying nor preaching in human forms of speech, has been less perverted to evil purposes, than the liberty which Christians generally now exercise of selecting the forms of words in which they utter praise with harmony. Would it be fair, hence to conclude, that men in *preaching* and *praying* should never use any words but those contained in a literal translation of the Bible? Then it is not correct to infer, that because some have written, compiled, and sung heretical hymns, therefore it is not lawful for

Christians to write, compile, and sing truly evangelical songs, in human arrangements of biblical words, and sentiments. But it is demanded, "Admit them once, where shall we stop?" Our answer is, that each supreme judicatory of its respective denomination, may be as safely trusted with the exercise of their discretion on this subject, as on that of the soundness of public preachers. Indeed we might as well trust a minister and session to judge of the soundness and suitableness of a *hymn*, as of a *sermon* or *prayer*, to be used in the congregation under their care; but to promote uniformity, it is desirable that as many churches represented in one general assembly, as can agree, should adopt some one system of psalmody, for their public use. It is requisite too, that great care should be exercised in examining any book of sacred songs, which is to be publicly approved and sung, because "if unsound in principle," it will be "a powerful means of seduction from the path of truth."

We admit, that in former days, Rouse's Version was sung in the New-England churches; and that then those churches were sound in doctrine. They were also generally sound, when they introduced the psalms and hymns of Watts, and continued so, for a considerable time, without any manifest deterioration resulting from their psalmody. In process of time, however, the *public preaching*, and private conversation of a few persons in Boston, who were ordained, when heretical, from a false notion of evangelical liberty and catholicism, converted many of the people to Arianism; and Dr. Watts was superseded by the Arian, Dr. Belknap. Dr. Freeman of the Stone Chapel, being a thorough and consistent Socinian, altered the Episcopal Liturgy, and compiled a selection of hymns to suit his own views; and subsequently several of the congregational ministers of Boston did the same; but the heterodoxy of the metropolis of New-England came from *preaching* heresy in part, and from *not preaching* the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, principally; so that the rejection of evangelical psalms and hymns was one of the *effects*, not the *original cause*, of the error now prevalent in that part of our country. "It is a fact, not admitting of doubt, that where his [Dr. Watts's] compositions were first, and

have been longest, used, in the psalmody of the church, Socinianism has made the most extensive progress," but it is no more fair to impute the growth of Socinianism to the psalms and hymns of Watts, than to the spirit of the American Revolution, or many other things; for where the spirit of civil liberty and national independence was first manifested in America, and where a college was first instituted, and has longest flourished in the United States, there Socinianism has made the most extensive progress.

Letter V. contains the author's answers to objections brought against his doctrine of psalmody. We shall pass over these, and enter into a brief inquiry into the justice of his treatment of Dr. Watts's writings on the subject of psalmody. Some remarks on the comparative advantages of the poetical productions of Rouse and Watts will then conclude this article.

That some of the later writings of Dr. Watts were inconsistent with many of his former ones, and were hostile to the real deity of Christ, and the doctrine of the Trinity, is incontestible; but this has no concern with the present controversy. If any writings in the world clearly express the doctrines of the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus, his psalms and hymns and Christian doxologies do. But does Dr. W. deserve all the censure for his preface to the Psalms, his preface to his Hymns, and his "Short Essay towards the Improvement of Psalmody," which has been accumulated upon his memory?

His prefaces contain, says the Apology, "a bitter libel against the original songs of Zion." p. 59. "It was found that the use of scripture songs 'flattened devotion, awakened regret, and touched all the springs of uneasiness in the worshipper's breast.' Such were the sentiments, and such was the language of Dr. Watts." p. 60. "Ancient piety, I think, would not have listened with patience to be told, that the words of inspiration 'darkened our views of God our Saviour, tended to make heresy triumphant,' and that David was unfit to appear in the sanctuary, till converted into a Christian by such a man as Dr. Watts. Had we no information on the subject, but what the doctor's prefaces supply, we would [should] be tempted to inquire, whether he was, indeed, friendly to our religion, or, whether he was an enemy in disguise. We have read *Christianity as old as the creation*; an imposing title, covering a bold attack upon divine

revelation. An imitation of a portion of David's psalms, accompanied by a libel against the rest, by Dr. Watts, promises little more than the insidious publications of Mr. Tindal." p. 71.

Whither has our author's candour fled? Surely he must have read Watts with jaundiced eyes, and such narrow vision, as would allow him to see no more than half a line at a time. We should naturally conclude from this severity, without any examination, that our author was not a little heated by the fires of party spirit. He must have quoted from Watts as he has done from Mr. Freeman. "I have proved," says Mr. Freeman, "that we have no authority, *divine nor human*, for singing David's psalms—they should not be used, p. 20." Apol. p. 83. Now let us quote a little from Mr. Freeman's Discourse, ourselves.

"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." p. 4.—"They should not be used AS A SYSTEM OF PSALMODY under 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:—and that it should in an eminent degree embrace the peculiarities of the gospel." p. 20.

Here let our readers remark, that there is a wide difference between saying, *The psalms of David should not be used*, and, *They should not be used as a system of psalmody*. Mr. M. M. by cutting a sentence in two, where the author has not even a comma, makes him assert that David's psalms should not be used at all; whereas Mr. Freeman has asserted, that although there is no positive injunction authorizing Christians to use them, yet they may lawfully be used, but should not constitute the whole or *the only SYSTEM* of psalmody.

Now, if Dr. Watts has met with no better treatment than Mr. F. it may be possible to defend the greater part of his expressions on this subject.

We have already seen what Dr. W. thought of *the original songs of Zion*; and it cannot be that he should have intentionally written *a bitter libel* against them; whatever he may have said against Rouse's versification of them. He says, "though the Psalms of David are a work of admirable and divine composure, though they contain the noblest sentiments of piety, and breathe a most exalted spirit of devotion; yet when the best of Christians attempt to sing *many of them in our COMMON TRANSLATIONS*, that spirit of devotion vanishes and is lost, the psalm dies upon their lips, and they feel scarce any thing of the holy pleasure." Would not any candid person say, here is an open acknowledgment of the inspiration of the Book of Psalms; and there can be no doubt, from the very beginning of his preface, but that the author is *a friend* to our holy religion? More than twenty versions of the Psalter, Dr. W. had seen, in which the writers had attempted to combine a literal translation with metre and rhyme, for the purpose of adapting them to music. Many of the psalms in these common translations were calculated to destroy and not to promote devotion; and instead of singing them, he would prefer to read the common prose translation. Now, we freely acknowledge, that it was a long time after we first heard some words stretched out, and others clipped, or cut in two, and spliced in the public singing of Rouse, that we were able to exclude the conception of something ludicrous in it. Who does not feel disgust at hearing the word salvation sung, *sal-va-ti-ci-on*, as it must be in multitudes of places, to eke out the line, unless you would destroy the harmony of the voices engaged in praise, and thereby produce a most painful confusion? It is some such mode as this of singing some of *the common metrical translations*, (for none else were generally attempted to be *sung* in his day,) that Watts asserted "doth not only flat our devotion, but too often awaken our regret, and touches all the springs of uneasiness in us." He never said, that *the words of inspiration*, or *the original songs of Zion* did this. Those portions of the psalms which are least suited to our own circumstances, might be sung, he says, were the versifier to throw them into the form of narration, so that they might be uttered by a con-

gregation "rather in an historical manner," than in one in which the personal pronouns *I* and *we* are retained. Take a part of the 108th psalm, and each individual of the congregation might chaunt, or sing, *I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of mine head; Judah is my lawgiver; Moab is my wash-pot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph. Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me into Edom?* Public singing is an act of social worship, and every singer should adopt each line as his own. It is no more lawful to tell lies in our psalms, than in our social prayers. No one, therefore, could, in honesty, now adopt the last quoted words as his own; but let him connect something like a historical caption with verse seventh, and another taken from the title of the Psalm with verse tenth; and then he might sing, as in Rouse,

" God in his holiness hath said,
Herein I will take pleasure;
Shechem I will divide, and forth
Will Succoth's valley measure," &c.

Rouse, however, represents the same speaker, Jehovah, as asking, in v. 10, 11,

O who is he will bring me to the city fortify'd?
O who is he that to the land of Edom will me guide?
O God, thou who hadst cast us off, this thing wilt thou not do?

We apprehend David becomes the speaker at the beginning of these interrogations; and one who sings instead of applying them to himself, should insert before them, *thus David and his people sung*; for surely we cannot ask, who will bring us to the land of Edom; and Jehovah did not pray, saying, *O God, wilt not thou, who hast cast us off?*

Is it just, then; because Watts was disgusted with the common metrical translations of the psalms, and thought that some of them could not be adopted by a Christian worshipper as the expression of his own sentiments, nor sung by him, unless they were thrown into the form of historical poems; to intimate, that he censured *the word of God* as calculated to *flatten devotion, awaken regret, and excite uneasiness?*

As to Dr. Watts's attempt to convert David into a Christian, we admit, that in the expression, the former took an unwarranted poetic license of speech; but he has not intimated that he doubted the eminent piety of the sweet singer of Israel, or thought that the personal irreligion of David would have excluded him from the Christian church. His evident meaning is, that several of the Psalms of David ought to be paraphrased, explained, or commented upon in the language of the New Testament, before they could be introduced into a Christian assembly to be sung there as the expression of each singer's personal views and feelings. Of the mode of conversion of which Dr. W. wrote, we have just given an example. Had W. been less of a poet, even in his prosaical writings, he would have given less offence to one whose musical and poetical habits must have been formed by the peculiar taste of Rouse "That very action" of singing, says W. "which should elevate us to the most delightful and divine sensations," in consequence of the manner in which it is performed, and sometimes "from the matter and words to which we," who sing some one of these twenty metrical translations, "confine all our songs," "doth not only flat our devotion, but too often awaken our regret."

But, says our author, Dr. W. has more than intimated that there is "a contradiction between the word of God in the Old Testament, and the word of God in the New Testament." p. 71. Now we deny that Dr. W. asserted any such thing. He says, that all the psalms may be profitably read and sung, either by adopting the language, when it is appropriate, as our own, or by using it as a history of ancient saints; but, that some of the psalms in the words of the translations used in public singing in his day, when adopted as the address of a Christian congregation to God, were "almost opposite to the spirit of the gospel," calculated *to darken our sight of God our Saviour*, and "contrary to the new commandment of loving our enemies." This is no intimation that the original songs of the Old Testament, when considered in their original relations, and as prophetic exhibitions of the vengeance of God against his enemies, are contrary in word or spirit to the New Testament, or to the commandment of Christ

that we should love our enemies. He refers to psalm lxi. 26, 28. Here it is manifest that no worshipper can sing, with a view to express his own feelings and desires, in relation to

“Those men that do without a cause bear hatred unto me,
 “Out of the book of life let them be raz’d and blotted quite;
 Among the just and righteous let not their names be writ;”

without a spirit directly hostile to the gospel, and without a direct violation of the commandment, *love your enemies*. Yet one would naturally, from the use of a simple translation of the verses, be led to sing his own malignant execrations against his own personal enemies, and to think that he was doing God service by breathing out revenge. To prevent such a misapplication of the psalms, our Scotch brethren have in some editions a considerable preface to many of them, explanatory of their origin and design: and Dr. Wylie’s church use a book containing Gillie’s abridgment of Horne’s commentary on the separate verses. They show, too, by their short sermons on the Psalms, before singing them, with what views their hearers should use them; and if their people have skill enough to sing with mental reservations, paraphrases, and applications, without any personal regard to their own enemies, it is well. Now Dr. W. would have some of these instructions contained in the prosaic prefaces to the psalms, or in the explanations and illustrations of the minister of the gospel, incorporated in the song, that the people may sing the true history along with the pious sentiments, instead of singing one thing and understanding another. In the 69th psalm, the psalmist evidently personates Christ, and represents him as one to whom vengeance belongs, as praying in his mediatorial character, for the final destruction of all the enemies of his spiritual kingdom. Dr. Watts might with propriety have followed the original of this psalm more closely, but he did wisely to incorporate his preface with the song, and to indicate, that the imprecations of the psalmist are but prophetic declarations of the judgments of the Lord. Hence he sung, what many would have directed the worshipper to understand, in the use of Rouse’s versification:

“’Twas for our sake, Eternal God,
 Thy Son sustain’d that heavy load
 Of base reproach, and sore disgrace,
 While shame defil’d his sacred face

• • • • •
 But God beheld ; and, from his throne,
 Marks out the men that hate his Son ;
 The hand that rais’d him from the dead,
 Shall pour the vengeance on their head.”

Here might have followed a detail of the evils which Jesus declared should come upon them : and a very little paraphrase might have prevented the possibility of weak man’s singing the vengeance of Jehovah as if it were his own.

Mr. M‘M. cites Dr. W. as saying “ there are a thousand lines in it—the Book of Psalms—which were not made for a church in our days—I should rejoice to see—*David converted into a Christian* : but because I cannot persuade others to attempt this glorious work, I have suffered myself to be persuaded to begin it.” p. 100.

Give Dr. W. his due, however, and we shall record his words thus : “ *there are a thousand lines in it which were not made for a church in our days, TO ASSUME AS ITS OWN.*” This last clause materially affects the sense of the one which precedes it ; and the quotation of it prevents, at once, the impression which his opponent designed to produce. The extracts generally, which the *Apology* gives from Watts, are managed in this way. By quoting in a different manner, we will let Dr. W. though dead, defend himself.

“ Far be it from my thoughts to lay aside the book of Psalms in public worship ; few can pretend so great a value for them as myself ; it is the most artful, most devotional, and divine collection of poesy ; and nothing can be supposed more proper to raise a pious soul to heaven than some parts of that book : never was a piece of experimental divinity so nobly written, and so justly revered and admired : but it must be acknowledged still, that there are a thousand lines in it which were not made for a church in our days, to assume as its own : there are also many deficiencies of light and glory, which our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles have supplied in the writings of the New Testament ; and with this advantage I have composed these spiritual songs, which are now presented to the world.

Nor is the attempt vain-glorious or presuming; for in respect of clear evangelical knowledge, *The least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than all the Jewish prophets.* Mat. xi. 11." p. 128 of his works vol. ix.—“You will always find in this paraphrase dark expressions enlightened, and the Levitical ceremonies and Hebrew forms of speech changed into the worship of the gospel, and explained in the language of our time and nation: and what would not bear such an alteration, is omitted and laid aside. After this manner should I rejoice to see a good part of the book of Psalms fitted for the use of our churches, and David converted into a Christian.” p. 129.—“Another reason why the Psalms ought not to be translated for singing just in the same manner they are for reading, is this, that the design of these two duties is very different: by reading we learn what God speaks to us in his word; but when we sing, especially unto God, our chief design is, or should be, to speak our hearts and our words to God. By reading we are instructed what have been the dealings of God with men in all ages, and how their hearts have been exercised in their wanderings from God, and temptations, or in their return and breathings towards God again: but songs are generally expressions of our experiences, or of his glories; we acquaint him what sense we have of his greatness and goodness, and that chiefly in those instances which have some relation to us: we breathe out our souls towards him, and make our addresses of praise and acknowledgment to him.” p. 8.

A Christian congregation may sing historical cantos, but the chief design of psalmody is to unite the people of God in one melodious expression of such sentiments of praise, adoration, gratitude, and love as are due to Jehovah. Each individual who says *I* in any psalm, unless he quotes the language of another, ought to speak something which is true concerning himself; and those who adopt the plural *we* and *us*, something relative to the congregation engaged in worship.

Let us then come to a brief comparison of the productions of Rouse and Watts.

Rouse makes each singer utter, as if they were truly applicable to himself, many expressions which were by the Spirit designed to denote the personal feelings of Christ, or of David alone. The twenty-second Psalm affords many instances of this. The book in our hand is commonly used: it has no preface to any psalm: and begins,

“My God, my God, why hast thou me forsaken? why so far
Art thou from helping me, and from my words that roaring are?”

All that me see laugh me to scorn; shoot out the lip do they;
They nod and shake their heads at me, and mocking, thus do say,
This man did trust in God, that he would free him by his might;
Let him deliver him, sith he had in him such delight.”

Now these expressions were designed as a prophetic representation of Christ's prayers and complaints in agony; and yet the singer, unless he sings with mental reservations and explanations, or with his preacher's understanding, and not the meaning of his own words, must attribute Christ's peculiar circumstances and sufferings to himself, falsely. Dr. Watts, by a little history taken from the New Testament illustration of this psalm, enables the singer to celebrate Christ's trials and anguish, instead of literally uttering lies concerning himself.

“Now let our mournful songs record
The dying sorrows of our Lord,
When he complained in tears and blood,
As one forsaken of his God.
The Jews beheld him thus forlorn,
And shake their heads and laugh in scorn;
*He rescued others from the grave,
Now let him try himself to save.*”

Instances of this kind, in which the psalms of Watts carry their own explanation along with them, and in which Rouse's do not, are numerous.

Those who sing Watts can mean as they sing; but in very many lines, those who sing Rouse must understand something very different from what their words express.

The former has combined many passages of the New Testament, as in the last quotation, with the writings of the ancient poets of Israel; and the latter has endeavoured, without succeeding in it, to exclude every thing from each psalm, but a literal translation of the original words.

Watts has much of that *light and immortality brought to light*, more clearly, *in the gospel*, by Christ and his apostles; while the psalms of Rouse seem adapted to a people whose religious privileges have never excelled those enjoyed by the Jews.

The versification of Watts is smooth, easy, and natural; while Rouse, to make rhymes and a literal translation, has

employed an inverted, harsh, unnatural, inharmonious style of versification, found in no other species of composition in our language.

Watts has given us beauties from every poetical part of the Bible; and Rouse has not attempted to derive aid from any portion of the scriptures besides the book of psalms.

The sacred songs of Watts give us, for the above reason, a greater portion of divinely revealed truth, than the paraphrase of Rouse.

In the psalms of Watts the names of Christ, and the ideas of objects familiar to one living under the last dispensation of the covenant of grace, are frequently introduced; but while Rouse has psalms that treat of Christ, it is only under the comparative obscurity of the Hebrew dispensation, by prophecy, types, and shadows, if we except a few passages in which Jesus is designated as the Son, Lord, and Most Mighty.

Rouse, however, has versified after his own fashion, all the psalms, and Watts has omitted several, which it was desirable should have been introduced; and which defect Dr. Dwight has in a great measure supplied in his revision of our system of psalmody.

Rouse again, we believe, cannot be charged with any unscriptural doctrines; but in some few instances we must withhold this praise from Watts. In his version of the fifty-first Psalm, for instance, Watts represents a penitent as saying, notwithstanding his consciousness of penitence,

“Should sudden vengeance seize my breath,
I must pronounce thee just in death;
And if my soul were sent to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well.”

No man, who believes himself to be truly penitent, and who has a good acquaintance with the plan of salvation, can say that God would now be just, and his law righteous in sending him to hell, for Jehovah has solemnly promised to save him; and his salvation is a debt of justice to Christ. Dr. Dwight allows this verse to remain unaltered; but Dr. Livingston was too sound a divine to follow his example. He has omitted it, in his compilation. We should have preferred some alteration, to make it read thus;

Had sudden vengeance seized my breath,
 And sealed me for the second death;
 Yes, had my soul been sent to hell,
 Thy justice had approved it well.*

Had David, or any one else been sent to hell, without redemption and regeneration, it would have been strictly equitable.

The 106th hymn of Book 2d is an excellent one, if we except the first stanza; which we never sing, because we do not believe that any soul formed for woe, and knowing it, would ever exercise repentance. The part which we amputate, runs thus :

“ Oh, if my soul was form'd for woe,
 How would I vent my sighs!
 Repentance should like rivers flow,
 From both my streaming eyes.”

A slight alteration would render this verse sound in doctrine. Let us change it into the following form :

“ Oh, had my soul been doom'd to woe,
 How should I vent my sighs!
 Death's sorrows would like rivers flow
 Forever down mine eyes.”

The Rev. Messrs. Clark, Anderson, and M^r. Masters, have given us nearly the same criticisms upon several passages of Dr. Watts's psalms; and sometimes in the

* The corresponding verse in common metre is thus expressed ;

“Shouldst thou condemn my soul to hell,
 And crush my flesh to dust;
 Heaven would approve thy vengeance well,
 And earth must own it just.”

Mr. Clark very properly asks, p. 13. “Is not this a dangerous doctrine? How can a soul be condemned to hell after conversion? God says no such thing in the original. This imitation represents *David* speaking as an unpardoned soul, though God had sent *Nathan* to tell him he was actually pardoned. How unjust would it be after that pardon to damn him to hell! What heaven is it would approve such damnation?”

We would alter it thus,—

Hadst thou condemn'd my soul to hell,
 And crush'd my flesh to dust,
 Heaven had approv'd thy vengeance well,
 And saints confess'd thee just.

same words. Some of their remarks on obnoxious stanzas are weighty, and not a few of them trivial. Mr. Anderson is most copious; and any one who chooses to consult him, will find all which the others have expressed, with much more, directed to the same object. The other two gentlemen have not uttered objections, however, like Mr. Anderson, from want of taste; for he seems no more fitted to the detection of poetical faults and beauties, than a ploughshare to perform the work of a graving-tool.

“They wound his head, his hands, his feet,
Till streams of blood each other meet,”

he represents as an instance of “puerile conceits.” p. 89.

There is reason to apprehend, that many of the opponents of Watts’s sacred songs read them with an evil eye; and feel themselves bound to discover greater blemishes in them than really exist. No doubt they are imperfect; and so are all the prayers and sermons uttered in our churches, in some respect or other. We could earnestly wish, that ecclesiastical testimonies, and warnings, and covenants, with the pride of consistency, had not bound very many of our highly esteemed brethren in the Lord, to look unfavourably on all “modern *hymnologists*.”

After all, the instances in which erroneous sentiments are expressed in Watts’s psalms and hymns are few, and might be easily corrected. Until they are, every minister and people are at liberty to avoid singing any part which they deem exceptionable; for God has commanded us to sing, and restricted our songs only by the injunction to *do every thing in the name of the Lord Jesus*. A form of psalmody he has not required us to observe, any more than a form in every prayer which we offer. But to promote union, and perpetuate sound doctrine, among brethren who agree in all essential doctrines, we should be glad to find a joint committee appointed by the supreme judicatory of each Presbyterian denomination in this country, who should

1. Give a copy of Rouse improved; or some metrical translation of each psalm without rhyme, and call it *Version Ist* :

2. Give a copy of Watts improved, or of some other

author, on each psalm, and call it *Version II*, or *III*, when more than one, besides Rouse, shall be deemed desirable: And

3. Append to these psalms, a selection of improved hymns, on any other poetical, or other suitable parts of the Scriptures. Let all other psalm and hymn books, then, be banished from our respective churches; and let our brethren in the Associate, Associate Reformed, and Reformed Presbyteries send delegates to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. The way will then be prepared for their and our Synods to be amalgamated; and so all the Presbyterian Churches in the United States will become one in Christian and ecclesiastical fellowship.

ARTICLE IV.—*Report of a Committee of the General Assembly, appointed for revising the Form of Government, and the Forms of Process of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America: ordered to be printed for the consideration of the Presbyteries. Phila. 1819. pp. 37. 8vo.*

IT is expected that next May, this Report, in a revised form, will be presented to the General Assembly, and sent down to the Presbyteries under its care, for adoption or rejection. It is of importance, therefore, since, after May 1821, it will probably become, in the final shape which it may receive, the ecclesiastical law of our judicatories, that any alterations, amendments, or additions, deemed advisable, should speedily be proposed for consideration and discussion.

In our judgment, this Report is a wise and judicious production; such as might have been reasonably expected from such enlightened and eminent men as Doctors Miller, Romeyn, Alexander and Nott. Comparatively few things contained in it would be improved by an alteration; and those few we shall expose with freedom, from a sincere desire, that the whole, when adopted, may be as complete as possible. Others, we hope, will freely exercise the same liberty.

The *Introduction* to the *old* form of government is to constitute the *first chapter* of the *new*. We are then told, “chapters ii. iii. iv. v. vi. vii. to remain as before.” But what is to become of chap. i. of the *old* form? We cannot



