

Notes

on

Psalmody

PSALMS 60.2-62.6

the land to
hast rent it:
bes thereof;
d thy people
s to drink the
ing,
a banner to
thee,
displayed be-
th. ^{Se'lah}
may be de-
ht hand, and
in his holi-
h;
é'chem, and
dley of Sác-
nd Má-nás'-
the defence
ptre.
spot;
I I cast my
thou because
me into the
unto E'dóm?
O God, cast
not forth. O
casts.
at the adver-
elp of man-
shall do val-
ll tread down
Protection.
on a stranged
of David.
God;
prayer.
te earth will I
when my
relmed:

Lead me to the rock that is
higher than I.
3 For thou hast been a refuge
for me.
A strong tower from the enemy.
4 I will dwell in thy tabernacle
for ever:
I will take refuge in the covert
of thy wings. ^{Se'lah}
O God, hast heard
my vows:
thou wilt preserve those that fe-
thee.
thou wilt preserve those that fe-
thee.
7 He shall abide before God for
ever:
Oh prepare lovingkindness and
truth, that they may preserve
him.
8 So will I sing praise unto thy
name for ever.
That I may daily perform my
vows.

God alone a Refuge from Treachery and
Oppression.
For the Chief Musician; after the manner
of Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

62 My soul waiteth in silence
for God only:
From him cometh my salvation.
2 He only is my rock and my sal-
vation:
He is my high tower; I shall
not be greatly moved.
3 How long will ye set upon a
man.
That ye may slay him, all of
you.
Like a leaning wall, like a tot-
tering fence?
4 They only consult to thrust him
down from his dignity;
They delight in lies:
They bless with their mouth,
but they curse inwardly.

^{Se'lah}
5 My soul, wait thou in silence
for God only:
For my expectation is from him.
6 He only is my rock and my sal-
vation:

¹ Or, together
all land was des-
troyed.
² Heb. salvation
³ Or, a rock that is too high for me.
⁴ Heb.
not.
⁵ Or, given a heritage unto those des-
troyed.
⁶ Heb. is silent unto God.
⁷ Or, as other-
wise said, Ye shall be slain etc.
⁸ Heb. he
thou shalt unto God.

James A. Grier

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I. The psalms are to be used in God's praise

II. The psalms are adapted to and sufficient for God's praise

III. Objections to the psalms

IV. Supplementary objections to hymns

Added note on the law of worship

Notes On Psalmody

There are some things not properly involved in a discussion of this subject which are often brought in. The effect is only to distract attention from the important questions really involved. The following are some of these:

1. The question at issue in the controversy between Psalm-singing Churches and those which sing hymns is not, *Is it right to sing the Psalms of the Bible?* Everybody acknowledges this. We are not called to defend the rightfulness of Psalm-singing.

2. It is not, *Should we sing any given version of the Psalms?* Any good metrical version is fit to be sung. So the Psalm-singing Churches have always thought and taught. The Genevan version of Marot and Beza (under Calvin, 1543), that by Wyatt and others, that by Sternhold and Hopkins (1562), Tate and Brady (1696), the Bay Psalm Book of New England, that by Francis Rouse (1649), and the usual versions of our own and other denominations of Christians, testify that it is not a question of singing versions, but of singing Psalms. Faithfulness to the original is, by our own denomination, counted essential to an acceptable version. Much of the attack on inspired psalmody has been and is upon versions (Annan's book was of this type). Thus you have sneers at "Rouse" and other versifiers, and criticisms upon their work as "paraphrases" instead of close translations; whereas the question is not primarily one of versions, but one as to the Psalms of inspiration.

3. Neither is the question one of *method in rendering the Psalms*. One may prefer the chant, a sort of musical use of the prose version, as was the usage in Scotland prior to the first metrical version. The whole matter of the precise method of presenting these divine compositions to God in praise, whether by chant or by tunes adapted to meter or with instrumental accompaniment, is aside from the real issue. The chant is an impossibility in the present status of popular music.

4. We are not called to consider the question as to whether we are ever to use other inspired songs of the Bible in praise or not. The issue is not between two classes of inspired praises, but between those which are inspired and those which are not—are purely human. When we get to the place where it is a question whether we shall include the Song of Solomon and the other poetry of the Scriptures outside of the book of Psalms in the Psalter of the Church, there will be small difficulty in reaching conclusions. The question as to matter of praise does not turn on this point. In the meantime the query is, “Shall man make his own praises, or shall he use those God has given him to employ?” I may say, however, in passing, that the judgment of the Psalm-singing Churches is against the use of other inspired poetry than the book of Psalms in praise to God. It is not thought it was designed for praise.

5. We do not admit into this discussion the query, “May we sing the Gospel?” The Gospel is not matter of praise to God, but of instruction to men. Of course, a man or a congregation may sing it if they want to. It will not, however, be praise to God any more than would the prophecies and history of the Bible were they sung. The question is, “What shall be used in *praise to God?*”

6. The question is not, “Is it *wrong* to sing hymns?” but whether it is clearly and divinely right? The man who asks simply, “Is it wrong?” will never know if it be right. He holds a negative position toward the truth. There is a wide difference between having a distinct and unequivocal right to do a thing, and not having any warrant for it, and so being in uncertainty as to the right or wrong. Especially in great questions of worship it is wise to know we are right. There is no question as to the Psalms being right, but no man under the sun can show it is right to sing human hymns in the worship of God. The Bible gives absolutely no warrant therefor. Its trend is wholly against it.

7. The question is not, “Is it lawful to sing hymns?” It is, “Is it right to sing them in the worship of God?” No one contends that they have no place. They afford entertainment, yield instruction, and may even be used to quicken devotion. There is no question about these things. It is, “Shall they be used in *praising God?*”

In more fully discussing the subject notice:

I. The psalms are to be used in God's praise

1. Praise in worship is a duty men owe to God. "Let all the people praise thee, O God, let all the people praise thee." Ps. 67:3. "Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works." Ps. 105:2. "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands." Ps. 100:1. "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." Col. 3:16. It was the duty of Old Testament saints thus to praise God, and it remains both by the Scripture and the common judgment of Christians a bounden obligation.

2. The means of praise, the material, must be provided in advance of the exercise. In the nature of the case it cannot be extemporized. Skill in both the poetical and musical arts is not to be commanded upon the instant it is required. The matter of praise must, therefore, be at hand for use when desired. The multitude of psalm books and hymn books testifies that this is so.

3. A book of praises has, therefore, been provided by God. The Holy Ghost has been in the field for centuries as the rival of all who profess to prepare praises for the Church of the living God. He has fastened the Psalter in its place in the canon for all the ages to come. New poets, and persons who think they are poets, will arise to impose their services as praise-makers on a long-suffering Church, and will disappear to be forgotten; but the words of our God will endure forever, and so the strains of divine psalms will sound even beyond the period of the judgment throne.

(a) He has presented the Church with a Psalm book as knowing what was suitable to his own praise. The God who gives the book is the God who receives the praise. He will be a rash man who will say that an uninspired poet knows as well as or better than the inspiring Spirit what will please God. It is not a question of what pleases the sinner, or even primarily what

edifies the singer, but of what is acceptable to Jehovah. The smell of the burning sacrifice was offensive to many an Israelite, but it was a sweet savor to his God. There are no discordant elements of sentiment and doctrine in the Psalms. Human misconceptions of the truth are unknown. There is nothing Baptist, or Methodist, or United Presbyterian here. There is only the inspired praise of the earthly sanctuary, and every heart that properly sings it makes sweet melody in the ear of its Lord.

(b) The book has been in existence from early times, ever since in the course of the progressive appointment of privileges to his Church praise was fixed as an ordinance. It is true occasional psalms had been previously given. Moses perhaps wrote the 90th Psalm and there was a song of triumph at the Red Sea, but when the time came for constant, formal sanctuary praise there was given a qualified psalmist, and at length the compilation called the “Book of Psalms.” So we have it as early as 280 B. C. in the LXX. It there appears also with titles attached to its compositions showing it was employed in sanctuary service. It was doubtless completed at a considerably earlier date. The fact of the aggregation of the scattered hymns in a book of hymns indicates God’s purpose to provide matter for his own praise, and to so occupy the ground that men would not have good reason for like work of their own; while the early and exclusive use of the book in this way shows what were the convictions of the early Church, both Jewish and Christian, as to its purpose.

(c) The Psalter is the only distinctly arranged material for worship God has provided. He has given no collection of prayers; even the Lord’s Prayer is not meant for liturgy, but for a model. He has inspired no prayer book. He has given no composite liturgical service—no collects, no litany. He has made no assignment of topics for worship for the Christian year. He has given no sermons, much less any volumes of sermons, for pulpit work. All these things are in possession of the Church, but they have been made by men. Just one feature of the ordinary ritual of worship has God given, and that is the praise service. He has recognized the need and he has met it with supply. The other things the Church uses are within the reach of human effort, aided by the ordinary gracious influences of the Holy Ghost. Praise is not.

(d) There is no promise of help in composing hymns. We would expect divine help if we sought to set the Gospel to music, for its singing would be a kind of preaching of the Gospel. It would not be praise, no matter how frequently we might so call it. However, there is no ground for expecting assistance in preparing offerings of song to God. There is promise of aid in prayer, in preaching the truth, in defending ourselves against accusers, in endeavoring to keep the commandments, but none when we take upon us the office of sweet psalmist in Israel. The chief sweetness comes from the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and that has ceased.

(e) There is no command anywhere to make hymns. There is to make prayer, to preach the Word, to search the Scriptures, to obey the law. The reason is plain. The hymn book was already made. David and a few others had command to prepare praise, and when the work was done there was no call that others should be put under commission for that purpose. From the fact that the work had already been done, there was neither command laid upon the later Church for it, nor the promise of the Holy Ghost therefor.

We are now ready to affirm that

4. The Book of Psalms has been appointed to be sung in worship. This has all along been implied; now it is distinctly alleged to be so. The action of praise and its material have not been left optional. A book has been provided, and its employment, not merely as a vehicle of didactic instruction, but as a medium of celebrating God's great and holy name in worship, has been commanded.

(1) It is given to the Church under a title showing its contents and mission: "Sepher Tehillim"—"book of praises," "book of Psalms," "book of hymns," according as we may wish to translate it. You take up Robinson's "Songs of the Sanctuary," and what do you understand is the purpose of the volume? Is it to be regarded as a book to be read for instruction? It may be so read, but it does not thus serve its full purpose. That purpose is to furnish matter of praise. Its author designs it to be used in that way. So you take up God's hymn book, "Sepher Tehillim," and inquire as to its purpose. The response is easy and distinct: It is to be employed in praising God. To this end chiefly it has been given to the Church, and has a place in the canon.

We do not compass the purpose or obtain the blessing of the book when we regard and use it merely for purposes of instruction.

(2) The appointment of the book for praise is seen from the title of its principal author: “The sweet Psalmist of Israel.” This was not his name—that was David. It is a designation of his office. Jeremiah wrote poetry, and so did Isaiah, but they were not “sweet Psalmists,” or Psalmists of any degree—they had no office as Psalmists. But David was a “sweet Psalmist” to the Church of God, an office; and the product of the man in his office was designed to serve as the Psalmody of the Church to which he bore relation as Psalmist. The position was not given to crown David with honor, but that benefits might accrue to God’s people and glory to God’s name. Others were associated with him in the work as Psalmists, but they were of the same spiritual genius and under the same commission, and hence all the book bears his name. (2 Sam. 23:1,2.) If the book was not intended for use in God’s Church, why appoint and qualify a Psalmist? Why inspire that particular type of composition, lyrical poetry, chiefly suitable for praise? Such work has its sphere as truly as prophecy has its sphere, or history, or the record of the law. The very fact that Psalms are here by inspiration shows their appointment to the end they are best fitted to serve, praise, and implies a command to use them. Before David’s time Psalmody was occasional, but now a collection was prepared adapted to the progressive enlargement of the Church. Praise becomes a distinct ordinance.

(3) Especially is this seen when we discern the matter of these compositions to be that of praise. They are devotional in their cast. They pour out their soul before God in celebrating the glory of his name and his works. Even the historical Psalms and those having an historical setting are meant to be praises. Ps. 105 tells of Israel’s early experiences, including Egypt, and yet it begins, “O give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people, sing unto him, sing Psalms unto him.” And closes, “Praise ye the Lord.” So Ps. 106, delineating the history of the wilderness, begins with “Praise ye the Lord, O give thanks unto the Lord: for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever,” and closes thus: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting; and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the Lord.” The genius of praise

everywhere presides in these divine lyrics. Their character and substance, therefore, point to the end they were to serve.

(4) The Psalms are distinctly mentioned as employed in the Old Testament Church worship. 2 Chron. 29:25-30; Neh. 12:24. Hezekiah and Nehemiah were reformers, and had the divine commission to set in order God's house. Among other things they rearranged (Neh. 12:24) the praise service, in which the Psalms were to be used. The point to be gathered from all this is that the Psalms were recognized in those days as adapted to and designed for worship, and were presented with divine approval. They were appointed as a part of divine worship, and in the reformatory periods they were reinstated in their place. With these historical facts must be coupled the direct commands of the Psalms themselves. Ps. 69. "Sing unto him, sing Psalms unto him." Ps. 105:2; also 1 Chron. 16:9. "Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with Psalms." Ps. 95:12. "Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praises in the congregation of saints." Ps. 149:1. Wherever, therefore, this book of praises comes it carries commandment to use its material in divine worship. It insists on its own appointment.

(5) Our Lord used Psalms at the Paschal Supper. Ps. 113-118, the great Hallel,—so called from the first words of Ps. 113. Three facts of interest are here presented:

(a) These Psalms are called in the accounts of the occasion a "hymn." This shows us the New Testament idea of the "hymn": an Old Testament Psalm or Psalms.

(b) The Old Testament Church was accustomed to use Psalms in praise—those they possessed by divine gift. Even if there was any doubt of the divine appointment of Psalms for worship, the employment of them by our Lord the King and Head of the Church is a practical appointment. That which he approves is thereby appointed. So late, therefore, as the end of his life he authorizes the use of the Psalms in worship. He authorizes nothing else.

(c) The contents of the Psalms were by our Lord accounted sufficient and adapted to the New Testament scene with which they were then

connected as praise—the height of New Testament ordinances, the Lord’s Supper. We never get higher up the mount of ordinances than did that apostolic band and our blessed Lord himself that night, and yet he counts what some sneer at as “these Jewish Psalms” to be all the soul requires, to praise the Father and to lift the heart before the throne. He provides no new songs. As Lightfoot says, “He who could have inspired every disciple to be a David sings the Psalms of David.”

5. The book is recognized in the Gospels and the Acts as the praise book. These writings show the thought of the early Church. Not alone by our Lord’s example, but by the uniform references to it do we see the account that was taken of it. We read of “the Psalms” and the “Book of Psalms”; there was no other praise book—no rival Psalm books. It should be easy, therefore, to know what is meant when James says, “Is any merry, let him sing Psalms”; and when Paul writes to the Ephesians and Colossians that they are to sing “Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs”; or to the Corinthians that some of them might have “a Psalm” for the edification of the Church. There is no hint anywhere of any other book; while in the nature of the case praises are to be prepared in advance, and by persons competent, who are certainly not likely to be found in a newly organized and unspiritual Church. History shows that the culture of the early centuries in Christian thought did not provide poets for the Church.

6. It is acknowledged by many writers that the Psalms are designed to be sung. An occasional controversialist, hard pressed by the argument, has said that they fill their mission when they are read and used for purposes of instruction. He would not say that about his own hymn book, for it does not serve its purpose, that for which designed, unless its contents be sung. The allusions to singing and musical instruments in the Psalms and other books of the Bible, together with the devotional spirit everywhere pervading, should take that petty quibble out of the mouths of even the weak and illogical of our opposing brethren. However, the great minds conspire to say that these hymns of the Lord are intended for the singing of praise, e. g., Jonathan Edwards: “Another thing God did toward this work [redemption] was his inspiring David to show forth Christ and his redemption in divine songs which should be for the use of the Church throughout all, ages... God hereby gave the Church a book of divine songs for their use in that part of

their public worship, viz.: singing his praises throughout all ages to the end of the world.” Alexander, in the preface to his Commentary on the Psalms, says: “They [the Psalms] are not only poetical, but lyrical, i. e., songs or poems intended to be sung.” So also Albert Barnes: “The Psalms are intended to be sung, not read.” In like manner Lightfoot and many others. The point that this book is for purposes of praise is too plain to need elaboration.

7. The contents of this book have distinct appointment in New Testament times as the Christian’s hymn book. Eph. 5:18, 19; Col. 3:16. Attention is called to a careful, detailed and able criticism of these texts in the Department of New Testament Literature and Exegesis. But in this connection some attention to these texts is necessary. Observe, therefore:

A. There is here no command to make hymns. The impression often gathered from the passages by inattentive readers is that human compositions are authorized. However, the only thing here authorized is the singing of “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.” They were made and at hand. If human compositions are hereby allowed, of course the authority to make them is essentially involved. But just see how under this supposition the case stands: (1) It is assumed that in the heathen Churches would be found persons having hymn-making capacity: that Corinth, with its corrupt morals and low thought; Colosse, with its unspiritual views of the new doctrine, and a Church everywhere embryonic in its character and feeble in its spiritual life, would possess that exalted view of the Saviour, and that nearness of communion with him, which would qualify for this most difficult work. How absurd it would be to require our mission churches to prepare fitting praises according to the standard of Christian truth and life! (2) In point of fact, no inspired men were raised up to perform a work which these Jewish and semi-heathen Christians could not accomplish. No apostle, or anyone else, wrote hymns under the impulse of inspiration. (3) In point of fact, also, no uninspired hymns were prepared in the Church until about the end of the second century, and the evidence is strong that what we have as fragments of poems was not intended for praise. Clemens Alexandrinus (died 220) has left a hymn, but even Dr. Schaff says, “It is not at all suited to public worship, and was probably never intended for public use.” Bingham (in the “Antiquities”) asserts that the early hymns were to

counteract error, and not for praise. A letter from Pliny to Trajan (A. D. 104-112) respecting Christians in Bithynia states "that they used to assemble on a fixed day before it was light and to sing among themselves alternately a hymn to Christ as to God." It is not necessary to assume, however, that human hymns are referred to, as is often done, inasmuch as in the Psalms Christ is honored as God. The ancients understood this; so Tertullian says (A. D. 150-220), "But even almost all the Psalms exhibit the person of Christ." What, then, are we to conclude? Just this: That since no human hymns were made for praise, the early Church did not understand the passages in Ephesians and Colossians as authority to make praise, and rested content with that which God had made. There is no more sheer assumption in all theological controversy than that the early Church made and sang its own hymns. The first human hymns were sung by the Gnostics and other heretics. Bardesanes (224 A. D.) made 150 Psalms to supplant David. Paul of Samosata introduced his low views of Christ into the churches through, the same channel. For the sake of counteracting these heresies the orthodox resorted to poetry also. It is said in opposition to this general view that the words in Colossians, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs," are authority for human hymns on two grounds: First. The "Word of Christ" refers only to the New Testament, is exclusive of the Old, and hence of Old Testament Psalms as exclusive matter of praise. By having the "Word of Christ," or the New Testament Gospel, dwelling in them richly they were to compose songs of praise. Reply. Christ is the Prophet of the Church under both Testaments, and all the Bible is the word of Christ, one part no more than another. The fact that "singing" is mentioned as the means of "teaching and admonishing" indicates the part of Christ's word which we are to bear in our heart at such times, i. e., the praises of God which the Prophet has caused to be written. Second. The other objection is that the words, "teaching and admonishing one another," convey the idea that it was the duty of the Colossians to compose such poems as would be suitable to sing for mutual instruction. Reply, (a) It is commonly accepted that the Psalms here mentioned are the inspired Psalms. The command to teach and admonish with them would scarcely be a command to make the Psalms already made by God. If there is no command here to make these, what reason is there for saying the passage is authority for making "hymns and spiritual songs"? (b) The epistle is

addressed to the rank and file of Christians. It is not to be expected, however, that all Christians, or even many of them, will make songs of praise. There is no mere permission to make praises, but a duty is fixed: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing," etc. These addressed are those just called the "elect of God, holy and beloved." The whole context refers to the hoi polloi of the Church. To say that, when the Church raises up occasional hymnologists, she has discharged the commission, is just like saying she has so done with regard to the command to pray by raising up a few praying people, or with regard to beneficence when a few liberal men are found to give gifts to the Lord. The truth is that, while the obligation to sing praises is laid upon all, none have authority to make them.

B. It is scarcely a possible thing that an inspired apostle would place divine and human compositions on the same level of praise as he does in case "Psalms" are God's and "hymns and spiritual songs" are man's. It is not possible that he would make both the word of Christ: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," etc. It is impossible that he would make human composition the equal of the Psalms of inspiration in teaching and admonishing, and yet he exhorts to "teach and admonish one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs," putting them all on the same level. It is beyond all doubt that he would not make human and divine thought the exact equivalents for filling men with the Spirit. And yet he does just this thing with these compositions: "Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms, hymns," etc. Eph. 5:18. What is the conclusion of all this? That none of these compositions so designated were human.

C. The terms "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" refer exclusively to the inspired compositions of the Psalter, and in no sense to the uninspired work of men. All these types of praise are found in the Psalter. It abounds in "*psalmois*," "*humnois*" and "*hodais*" by the very designations or titles of the Psalms in the Psalter of the LXX. You will find the idea somewhat presented also in our English Psalter. Ps. 18 is a "Psalm song" by the title; Ps. 30, 45, 46, etc., are "songs." There are none in the English Psalter called "hymns" distinctly, but since the whole book is called in Hebrew "the book of hymns," and such Psalms as the 23d and 100th are in the Presbyterian and other hymnals called "hymns," there should be no doubt on this point. At

any rate, the authority here is not the English version, but rather the Scriptures in use when the New Testament was written. They use “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” in referring to the Old Testament Psalms. The LXX, or Greek version of the Old Testament Scriptures, was in Paul’s day the one in use among the Hebrews and Hebrew and Greek Christians. They used almost no other. It is a well known fact that the Greek Psalter styles its contents by these names, e. g., Ps. 6 is entitled “Among the hymns in the octave”; Ps. 54, “Among the hymns.” The same word occurs in the titles of the 55th, 67th, 76th and others of the Psalms. Some titles combine two of these names, while Psalm 76 combines all three. There is no very essential difference in the composition. Ps. 120-134, inclusive, are called “odes” or “songs.” As for “Psalms,” many are found. It was the natural thing for Paul in commending the Psalms to do it in terms well understood by all who read his epistles. In view of these titles in their Psalter, not one of those Greek-speaking Jews or converted pagans would misunderstand Paul; and especially as they knew nothing about any hymns and spiritual songs except those in their Psalm book. There were no human compositions used for praise. To understand the matter, we are not to locate ourselves in our own times, when the Church is flooded with compositions called hymns and spiritual songs, but in the times when there were none in the Lord’s Church, except those the Lord had given, and ask what would those Greek-speaking Christians—with the Psalter of the LXX. in their hands, and no other psalms, hymns and spiritual songs known to them and used in God’s praise—what they would understand the apostle to mean? When we do so there can be but one answer. This thought is strengthened by the fact these terms are but translations of the terms descriptive of various compositions in the original Hebrew Psalter, viz., Mizmorim, Tehillim and Shirim, more or less familiar to many of these Greek-speaking singers.

There has been some disposition to refer the Psalms mentioned distinctly to the Psalter and to go elsewhere for hymns and spiritual songs. However, by almost all authorities a “Psalm” may also be a “hymn” and a “spiritual song.” To find that Psalms are given by inspiration and hymns and spiritual songs are the product of mere human poetic genius, is without any scriptural warrant or evidence of any sort that will stand examination. Especially is this seen by the fact that all these titles of compositions are in the Psalter. In this connection it is noteworthy that the hymn-singing

Churches make no practical distinction between psalms, hymns and spiritual songs; everything is indifferently called “hymns.”

The term “spiritual song” is a natural and ordinary New Testament one to denote the product of inspiration. To nothing is the term “spiritual” applied in the New Testament which is not the product of the Holy Ghost, unless it be in one instance. “Spiritual” is not merely the antithesis of “fleshly” and “material,” but something inwrought by the divine Spirit, inspired of God. There is no difficulty in proving this by many authorities. Meyer in Eph. 5:19, distinctly alleges “*pneumatikais* defines the songs as proceeding from the Holy Spirit, as *theopenstous*” He holds, however, that all the “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” were the product of the gifts of the Spirit known in the first age of the Church, but now all gone. This last idea is open to conclusive objections, but it is worthy of note that as to the term “spiritual” he is clear in assigning it to the direct influences of the Holy Ghost. All such songs were, in his view, inspired. Albert Barnes is clearly of the same view. He says, “The word must be used in the sense of spiritual, or that which is immediately given of God.” So also Prof. Warfield. I cite at length his published thought in the case, as quoted by another:

“Dr. Warfield, Professor of Theology in Princeton, referring to the use of *pneumatikos* (spiritual) in the New Testament, says: ‘*Pneumatikos* passed immediately, not only out of the lower sphere, wherein it might deal with the forces of material nature, but also out of the higher sphere, in which it dealt with the height of human nature, into something still higher and beyond. Thus in twenty-five instances in which the word occurs in the New Testament, in no single case does it sink so low in its reference as the human spirit, and in twenty-four of them it is derived from *pneuma*, the Holy Ghost. In the sense of belonging to or determined by the Holy Spirit, the New Testament is uniform with one single exception of Eph. 6:12, where it seems to refer to the higher, though fallen, superhuman intelligences.’ ‘Wrestle against spiritual wickedness in high places.’ This ought to be conclusive on this point. ‘Spiritual songs’ are songs of which the Holy Spirit is the author.”

The following from the Encyclopedia Britannica may be regarded as coming from unbiased authority. The author is Lord Selborne, F. R. S., under the title "Hymns":

"The modern distinction between psalms and hymns is arbitrary. The former was used by the LXX. as a generic designation, probably because it implied an accompaniment by the psaltery (said by Eusebius to have been of very ancient use in the East) or other instruments. The cognate verb (psallere) has been constantly applied to hymns, both in the Eastern and Western Church; and the same compositions which they describe are called by the LXX. 'odes' (songs) and 'hymns.' The latter word occurs, e. g., in Ps. 72:20 (the hymns of David the son of Jesse), in Ps. 65:1, and also in the Greek titles of the 6th, 54th, 55th, 67th and the 76th (this numbering of the Psalms being that of the English version, not of the LXX.). The 44th chapter of Ecclesiasticus, 'Let us now praise famous men,' etc., is entitled in the Greek Pateron Humnos, 'The Fathers' Hymn.' Bede speaks of the whole book of Psalms as called 'liber hymnorum' by the universal consent of Hebrews, Greeks and Latins. In the New Testament we find our Lord and his apostles singing hymns (humnentes exelthon) after the institution of the Lord's Supper; Paul and Silas doing the same (humnoun ton tJieon) in their prison at Philippi, James recommending Psalm singing (psalleto), and Paul 'Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs' (psalmois, kai humnois, kai hodais pneumatikais). Paul also, in the 14th chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, speaks of singing (psallo), and of every man's psalm (ekastos psalmon echei), in a context which plainly has reference to the assemblies of the Corinthian Christians for common worship." Then follows this significant remark: "All the words thus used were applied by the LXX. to the Davidical Psalms; it is therefore possible that these only were intended in the different places to which we have referred." "Here we have the testimony of Lord Selborne (in the standard work, the British Encyclopedia, which is certainly not biased in our favor) that all the words in the passage under consideration, namely, those translated 'Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs,' were applied by the LXX. to the Davidical Psalms. The Greek translation was the one in common use by Paul. Is not the conclusion a natural one, if not inevitable, that Paul referred to those Davidical Psalms when he used these very terms?" —Dr. Barr.

The little book entitled, “The True Psalmody,” offers, among other authorities for this view, the following:

“In an edition of the Westminster version of the Psalms, published in 1673, the reader will find a preface signed by the celebrated Dr. Owen (John) and twenty-five others, among whom are to be found the most illustrious divines that have ever adorned the Church. Their testimony on the point before us is given in the following words: ‘To us David’s Psalms seem plainly intended by these terms, psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, which the apostle saith, Eph. 5:19; .Col. 3:16.’ To the same effect is quoted Dr. Gill, the Baptist; Calvin and McKnight, and other authors of the past, but belonging to a time when the subject of praise was considered more carefully than it generally is now. Ridgely, the Puritan. (1734), in Vol. IV., p. 98, says that in his day it was a ‘common thought of learned men that Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs signify nothing else but these Psalms or songs that are contained in Scripture.’”

The lexicographers of the New Testament give the same meaning for “spiritual songs.” Robinson defines pneumatikos as “spiritual, or pertaining to or proceeding from the Holy Spirit,” and cites Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16: “spiritual songs” as those “composed in the Spirit, on spiritual and religious subjects.” Cremer says: “Pneumatikos means ‘determined by the Spirit,’” and refers to the spiritual songs of Ephesians and Colossians as “spiritually wrought gifts.” Thayer describes the spiritual songs of Col. 3:1.6 as “divinely inspired, and so redolent of the Holy Spirit.” We may regard as well established the view that the term “pneumatikos hodais,” spiritual songs, is descriptive of compositions directly inspired by the Holy Spirit for purposes of praise.

There is one objection urged to the idea that the Scriptures simply referred to the Bible Psalter when using these terms “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.” It is that the reference to the one Psalter by three terms, “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs,” instead of one, “Psalmoi” or “Biblos Psalmon” is not a natural form of speech, and hence the use does not indicate the Psalter, but other compositions as well. It only shows the weakness of the opposing position. Did the objector never read in 1 Kings 6:12: “If thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep

all my commandments to walk in them; then will I perform my word with thee?" Do not statutes, judgments and commandments all refer to just the same divine law? What have you in either case but Hebrew fondness for parallelism? Or look at I Tim. 2:1 for a New Testament example: "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions be made for all men." What have you here but a use of terms meaning about the same thing and parallel in usage to the verses in Ephesians and Colossians under consideration? The Apostle Paul and the Holy Ghost make no mistake in their use of terms.

8. The appointment of the Psalter to be the Church Book of Praise has never been abrogated, but there is a full recognition of it as a book of praise in the New Testament. This has been apparent from our consideration of passages from those Scriptures. As others have said, there are three ways in which the Psalter might have been set aside: (a) By the repeal by God himself, which cannot be shown; (b) By limited appointment. Instead, the New Testament confirms the appointment of Psalms; (c) By a substitute being appointed, which substitute cannot be produced.

There is no promise of a spirit of Psalmody. There are no collections of praises which God authorizes to take the Psalter's place. The spirit of inspiration has been withdrawn. The Psalms hold the field by right against all comers, and as far as we can see will do so until the redeemed sing the new, song before the throne.

There is a seeming exception to the idea of the perpetuity of the Psalter in i Cor. 14:15-26: "How is it then, brethren, when ye come together every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation" and, "I will sing with the spirit," and "I will sing with the understanding also. I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the understanding also." There are two ways of interpreting these terms, neither of which is against the perpetuity of the use of David's Psalms, or in favor of current hymnology. (1) They mean that when the congregation was assembled the persons who felt called upon to propound doctrine or to interpret Scripture or announce Psalms, should do so in decency and order. This interpretation will accord with the ordinary use of "Psalms" in the New Testament. It is an Old Testament song of praise. We can see how such

announcement may be referred to in view of the informal nature of the worship of the times, very much like one of our free prayer meetings. Persons may even now come to such meetings prepared with Psalms and addresses, and care is required to avoid confusion. This sense Dr. Charles Hodge says can hardly be accepted. To him the matter is not clear; it is clear to others. (2) The other interpretation is that the exercise of supernatural gifts is referred to, and the Psalms were improvised praises which were given by the instant movement of the Holy Ghost, They were nevertheless inspired Psalms. If so, none of them have been preserved and served their purpose in serving their occasion. Their use disappeared with the gifts of the Spirit commonly held to have been peculiar to that age. The validity of the ordinary praises of Israel, the Church, stands untouched by such compositions, just as the canon of Scripture stands untouched by the special revelations of doctrine of that time which are now lost.

Having thus presented the direct scriptural argument showing the appointment under both Testaments of the Psalms, and the Psalms alone for divine worship, a question arises as to the necessity of such divine appointment for praise. I therefore add another point concerning:

9. The divine appointment of the matter of praise is necessary to commonly accepted worship. This is clearly the teachings of the Westminster Standards and of the Word of God. Confession, ch. 21, sec. i. "But the acceptable way of worshiping the one God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will that he may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men." Larger Catechism, question 109: "The sins forbidden in the Second Commandment are, all devising, counselling, commanding, using, or in any wise approving any religious worship not instituted by God himself." There are abundant supporting Scriptures, e. g., Deut. 12:32, "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto nor diminish from it." "But in vain do they worship me teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

There can be no question as to the clearness of Scripture and the Confession as to the absolute necessity of divine appointment of acts of essential worship, of which praise is one. It is ordained of God. It has been

shown, however, I think with candor and clearness, that only the Scripture Psalms possess the requisite. It follows, therefore, that the Psalms alone, and no human compositions, are to be employed as praises before God. It is true the Confession allows (ch. I, sec 6), “There are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and the government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the rules of God’s Word which are always to be observed.” However, no one will claim that the substance of praise is a circumstance or an incident. In incidentals there is liberty, but not in essentials. The very thing that God requires must be done. This obedience is the test of piety. In essentials there is no room for judgments of expediency or natural preference. We are to obey and leave the responsibility with him who proposes to support it—our God! (See note at the end of this chapter on The Law of Worship.)

II. The psalms are adapted to and sufficient for God's praise

This follows if he appointed them, and left room for no other. God is to be judge in the case, for his are the Church and the worship. It is not a question of what men are pleased to offer, but of what God is pleased to receive. Observe: (1) *From David's time until Christ's, Psalms were employed as the sole medium of praise.* Even our Lord himself, who had more of the Gospel than all his Church combined, was content to use them on that height of New Testament revelation, the sacrament of the Supper. (2) *From the beginning of the Christian Church they have been the chief medium of praise.* This is a fact in the face of the current use of hymns. Their currency is of comparatively late origin. Very few hymns are over 300 years old. Yet the Church has been singing through the centuries, and in the main she has sung Psalms. Bardesanes and Harmonius, the Gnostics and heretics, it is true, sang hymns for the furtherance of their heresies; and Paul of Samosata (A. D. 270) silenced Psalm-singing for the sake of introducing hymns denying the divinity of Christ, and which in his own praise, according to Neander, "called him [Paul] an angel come down from heaven." To these the orthodox opposed hymns teaching the true doctrine, but according to Bingham, a man of much learning, many of such compositions were not designed for the worship of God. Much "singing of the Gospel" was then practiced which was not counted worship. That in the main was by the singing of Psalms. The existence of ancient religious poems and odes by no means proves they were designed for worship. As the evidence shows, they were chiefly for other purposes, such as enjoyment, spiritual guidance and edification. Certainly some hymns began to be sung in the third century as divine praises, but the chief vehicle of praise was the Psalms of David. Tertullian indicates the common use of Psalms; so Jerome, in the fourth century, and Cyril of Jerusalem, and Augustine of the same era, in North Africa. Athanasius of Alexandria used the Psalms in his church; and the same type of testimony comes by many witnesses through the first four centuries. Then, according to Neander, the introduction of human hymns into the worship of the Western Church was

in the face of much opposition, the demand being that in conformity with the ancient usage, nothing should be used in the praise of public worship but what was taken from the sacred Scriptures. (Hist., Vol. I., 304.) The council of Laodicea, in the fourth century, decreed against human psalms. The council of Braga (A. D. 561) decreed that none but the “songs of canonical Scripture” should be sung. The innovation of hymns was, however, steadily making its way, and in 633 A. D., at Toledo, in Spain, a council removed all restrictions. The corrupt age had for some time begun, and the man of sin was in power. Now the purpose of this historical sketch is just this—to show that for centuries the whole Church felt no need of what is called “a better adapted and more sufficient Psalmody.” The period of the practically exclusive use of inspired Psalmody was a missionary era, and, except our own, the best in history. When hymns were fully introduced it was not because of larger spiritual necessities, or spiritual power, for the full dawn of their age was in the obscurity of the Roman corruption.

Passing hurriedly over the period of the Dark Ages in which the light of the lamps of God almost went out in his temple, we yet catch as we move the glimmer of lights in the mountains. They are the Piedmontese churches. The Waldenses were Psalm-singers. The Albigenses in 1210 A. D. sang them in metre. They loved the Lord with a pure heart, and for his doctrine they died; and amid the corruptions of Rome they maintained a simple evangelical faith and a scriptural worship which made them his faithful witnesses. They fought their battles against the persecutors to the music of Psalms, and chanting the strains of Ziori, they went to their martyrdom and their reward.

"Avenge, O Lord, Thy slaughtered saints.
Whose bones lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even them who kept Thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshiped stocks and stones. Forget them
not."

Young brethren, the praises on the lips of martyrs have always been Psalms! In the trying times when the iron was in their souls and they wanted iron in their blood, they sang Psalms! When a man comes to die, if he knows anything about the praises the Lord has given him, he is likely to lean upon their strength.

Wicklif sang metre Psalms. Luther, as early as 1525 A. D., published a metrical version of the Psalms. In 1538, under Calvin's inspection, Marot published a part of the Psalms in metre; afterward the volume was completed by Beza. The demand was so great that the press could not supply it. Its popularity led the papist to interdict and burlesque it.

In England Sternhold and Hopkins, Tate and Brady, Wyatt, Armstrong and Francis Rouse prepared the Psalms in metre, and both in England and Scotland they were the common vehicle of praise. John Knox's Psalter was largely used in the latter country. So in New England one of the first books to issue from the press was the "Bay Psalm Book." For a long time the large bulk of the Protestant praise service on the continent, in England and America was the Psalms of David. The Confession of Faith knows no other. Isaac Watts, meeting that fact, and being a poet as well as a man of unsteady mind, took umbrage at it, and so undertook, as his preface tell us, "to make David speak like a Christian." With him was the beginning in the main of the renaissance of hymn-singing among the Reformed Churches.

But the point in hand in all these historical citations is that the Church, in medieval and even in modern times, has found the Psalter abundantly adapted to Gospel worship, and sufficient for praise. There is no such argument in this connection as that from history. It certifies to us that missions may be extended, piety may flourish, reformations may be enacted, communion with God may be cultivated, and martyrs may be strengthened unto death by the exclusive use of Psalms which the Holy Ghost has collected from around about the throne and put into the lips of psalmists who spake as they were moved by his power. Just here a multitude of objections to the Psalter center, and while some of them will be examined in detail, will you please notice, once for all, that objections to its fitness and sufficiency and adaptation for New Testament times are by the experience of saintly multitudes of the Church not true? (3) *Their range of subject and sentiment is all that can be desired.* There are Psalms displaying human sorrow and sin; human suffering and penitence; the human heart in its various moods and needs; thankfulness and the spirit of service; adoration of the one God in all his attributes; praise of the one God in three persons; recognizing divine providence; divine mercy and compassion; divine love and salvation; unfolding the beauty of Christ in his

wonderful work of redemption; presenting him in providence and in judgment; elevating him alike upon the cross and the throne; bringing men to God as persons, and households and nations; uttering fear and loyalty and love and high resolves before the Holy One; accepting salvation and entreating the spirit of gracious revival; rejoicing in the Church and in the statutes of God's law; breathing a spirit of dependence and of faith; swelling out into peans of praise; depicting the divine majesty and grace; the course of evil men, and the final home where God is the everlasting portion; showing the operations of the Spirit; expounding the priesthood of our Lord and everywhere exalting God. Subjective Psalms are numerous and traverse a wide territory, e. g., to quote from another, "In them are to be found the most heartbroken confessions of sin, its guilt, its defilement and power (19th, 32d, 51st, 130th), and most earnest supplication for forgiveness (30th, 32d, 51st). Their hope of acceptance is in a merciful God. The most devout and profound plea for pardon in any literature is Ps. 51. Frequently are here exhibited a sense, deep and abiding, of the need of divine teaching and the help of the Spirit of Christ (9, 30, 143). Ardent spiritual desires and affections (43, 44, 63). Strong faith and yet conflicting doubt (3, 4, 13). Gratitude and thanksgiving on almost every page; hopes of heavenly blessedness; deep interest in the welfare of the Church, of friends, of mankind (122, 35, 95, 96)." And so we might go on showing how the different moods and conditions of the Christian heart find utterance. To this we may add that there is often shown by contrast the supreme excellence of holiness and regard for God's law over sin, wealth, power, wisdom and learning, while everywhere are the high notes of Jehovah's praise. I cannot stop to cite the passages in detail or enumerate the subjects; suffice to say that the Psalter, in the hands of a skillful psalmodist and in such a version as ours, is all any soul can profitably use this side of the gates of pearl. Even over there, so far from needing "specially adapted" Gospel sentiment, we will be called to sing the song of Moses as well as of the Lamb.

Such has been said about the absence of Christ from the Psalms, and the need therefore of songs presenting him. Let me set before you something of what we here find concerning the Redeemer. In general just notice the numerous references to our Lord. He is called Jehovah, God, Anointed, King, Priest, Rock, Shepherd, (1) *Particularly his majestic person is displayed*. "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee." Ps. 2.

'I will be to him a father and he shall be to me a son." Ps. 89. "Worship him, all ye gods." Ps. 97. "Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." Ps. 45. "Sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool." Ps. 110. Just take the list of Messianic Psalms, 2, 8, 16, 22, 40, 45, 69, 72, no, and you have here a display of the person and work of the Saviour in such fullness and detail as to make us wonder whether those that object to the Psalms on this score have ever read them. To this may be added many allusions in Psalms not distinctly Messianic. (2) *The threefold office of Christ is displayed. As Prophet.* "I will declare thy name unto my brethren." Ps. 22. "Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips." Ps. 45. "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation. ... I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation. I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation," Ps. 40. *As Priest.* "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedek." Ps. 110. The work of the priest is fully set forth in Ps. 22:16-22, and also in Ps. 40. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened; burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come. I delight to do thy will, O my God." *As King.* "Yet have I set my king on my holy hill of Zion." Ps. 2. "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: the scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter." Ps. 45. The King's ascent to his throne is given in Ps. 47: "God is gone up with a shout and the Lord with the sound of trumpet." Ps. 68 presents the ascension to the place of power: "Thou art ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive." Ps. 24 depicts his coming to heaven to his full glory as Mediator: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors, and the king of glory shall come in." The book is full of the King and his kingdom. A multitude of quotations from the Psalms, far exceeding those given, is found in the New Testament respecting our Lord Jesus. The Holy Ghost had no trouble in finding Christ in the Psalms, when taking of his things and showing them to the New Testament writers. (3) To these allusions to our Lord in his distinct offices may be added those displaying his *tenderness and compassion*, e. g., "The Lord is my Shepherd." Ps. 22., "O thou, who the Shepherd of Israel art." Ps. 80. "The Lord thee keep, the Lord thy shade on thy right hand doth stay." His watchful providence over his own. Ps. 121. Even on the other side he will not leave his people: "Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore." Ps. 16. "Whom have I in the

heavens but thee, O Lord, alone"? Ps. 73. *His grace is displayed. In his sufferings*: "The assembly of the wicked have enclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet." Ps. 22:1-21. *In redemption*: "With the Lord is plenteous redemption." Ps. 130:8. *In pardon*: "Who forgiveth all thy transgressions. Ps. 103. *In communion*:"That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." Ps. 27:4. (4) *Most of the chief events of Christ's life are set forth in the Psalms. His birth*: "Thou art my God from my mother's belly." Ps. 22. *His rejection by the Jews*: "The stone which the builders rejected the same is become the head of the corner." Ps. 118. *The public entry into Jerusalem*: "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou perfected praise." Ps. 8 as quoted by himself in Matt. 21:18. His governorship among the nations is not the only thing taught us, but also the conspiracy which resulted in his death is referred to by Peter as he quotes it in Acts 4:25-28. His teaching and preaching are referred to in Ps. 40 and 45 and elsewhere. The division of his garments, the preservation of his bones unbroken, the howling of the mob, the wan, wasted appearance of his body, the rupture of his heart which caused his death, the effect of his work, the zeal of his consuming ministry, the vinegar and gall, his resurrection, his ascension, his providence, the calling of the Gentiles, and his final coming to judgment. Our Lord found himself everywhere in the Psalms, and opened before he went away the understanding of his disciples that they might discover him also. Luke 24:44. Well has Dr. Cook, of Belfast, said: "Truly I believe that there is one view of Christ that can be discovered only in the Psalms. I mean his inward life. The Holy Ghost has there laid open the inmost thoughts, sorrows and conflicts of our Lord." Oxenham thus describes the Christological elements in the Psalter: "Their inspired sympathy with every phase of the Redeemer's life-long passion ... has made the songs of Israel the rightful heirloom and common ritual of Christendom." We cannot elsewhere find so full a revelation of our Lord's feelings, his mental experiences when working out human salvation, as in the Hebrew Psalms. These are as fully the records of his soul as the Gospels are of the external life of the Saviour. That any spiritual heart should fail to discover the fullness of our Lord here can only be because the precious legacy is laid aside without much use. So fully did the ancient Church esteem this key unlocking the deepest depths of salvation in the subjective experiences of both our Lord and his children that it was its chief handbook of the Scriptures; the candidates for the clergy being required to repeat it from

memory and being, at least sometimes, refused ordination, no matter what other talents were possessed, when unable to do so. We occasionally hear of some preacher who feels he will not be able to close his Gospel services fittingly with one of David's Psalms. The least that can be said is that he is not saturated with the spirit of the Psalter as were the men of old. Besides, may I not appeal to your own observation in such cases, whether ordinarily a well chosen Psalm does not add dignity and power and a message of grace to the closing services which you never saw come from a human hymn. Use your Psalm books, gentlemen, as ministers of God's Word, with careful and loving intelligence, and you will never need and never want anything of mere human origin, even though many men deem human hymns better than any praise God has yet given.

III. Objections to the psalms

To some of these distinct replies have already in effect been given, e. g.: 1. *Their appointment has been abrogated.* 2. *They are not suitable to New Testament times.* 3. *So far from being exclusive matter of praise, there is New Testament ground for the use of hymns.* This has been discussed in reviewing the passages in Ephesians and Colossians. 4. *The name of Jesus does not appear in the Psalter.* This is shown to be essentially incorrect, in that he is there called the Anointed, the Son, the Shepherd, and by various other names he is *personally* distinguished. His work and mission are fully set forth, and everywhere he is viewed as the God of salvation, or the Saviour of men. It is a strange smallness in argument which insists on five vocal sounds, “Jesus,” Saviour, being necessary to a satisfactory Psalmody, when all the fullness of their meaning is displayed in the book which is refused. Many names of the Saviour are there, and an inspired delineation of his saving work, but these are counted valueless unless a certain vocable, meaning no more, is there found. What is Jesus, the man of Nazareth, except he be Messiah, discharging the mission of salvation? For what is he Messiah but to save? Why is he revealed as Son but to present him as Saviour? For what purpose presented as Shepherd except to show his care for his people in salvation? And so I might proceed. There is a littleness about a theology which will enter into such objections, and a feebleness and sentimentalism about the character that can haggle over the need of a shadow where there is all the substance, which nothing but the tonic of the Psalms themselves can cure. There are other objections which have only been incidentally considered. 5. *Hymns are not forbidden,* and hence the Psalms are not exclusive praise. Is that the sound principle of worship? Can we offer anything not forbidden? Scarcely. It is sound doctrine that we offer the things required. Indeed, a thing required forbids all other things. That was Cain’s trouble—he offered a thing not required, and hence forbidden. The worship of the Virgin Mary is not expressly forbidden, only in the same way as hymns, by something else being required. The seven sacraments are not forbidden. The confessional is not forbidden. Prayer for the dead is not forbidden. The ancient custom of salt in the mouth at baptism is not forbidden. The dissipations of modern life, such as gambling and dancing,

are not expressly forbidden. Altars, and vestments, and candles, and bowings, and the other mummerly of ritualism are not forbidden. Most of these things have yet been introduced into worship. Does the lack of prohibition make them right? It is not a question of prohibition, but a question of divine commandment. Has God commanded these things in his worship? The doctrine of the Confession and of Scripture is that God must *prescribe* a thing in order to its use as a veritable part of his worship. The question is, Will hymns stand the test? In the light of what has been said, it is evident they will not. 6. *Singing the Gospel is a very useful exercise*; hence it should be allowed in praise, and hence an exclusive psalmody is not required. Observe: (A) Singing the Gospel may indeed be a useful exercise to men, *but usefulness to men is not the test of praise to God*. (B) Singing the Gospel with the purpose of moving men toward Christ, as the evangelists claim, takes the exercise out of the sphere of divine praise. Singing the Gospel is not praise. (C) That singing the Gospel cannot be praise to God is evident because the Gospel is good news to *men*. It was never given from heaven to be sent back as a tribute to the throne. Where is the praise to God in a hymn expounding and applying to a congregation repentance or faith or the duty of a resolution to do God's will? People who call this sort of thing "praise Service" do not know the use of words. (D) The singing of the Gospel with a view to the congregation is but musical preaching of the Gospel. Even while it often occupies the place of praises in the sanctuary, it is yet but a preaching service in which all join. (E) As to the propriety of thus obeying the command, "Preach the word," nothing directly antagonistic will now be said, but only a few things to shed further light on its bearing upon the ordinance of praise, (1) It may be doubted whether the usefulness of the Gospel truth in such hymns is as great as imagined. The measure of truth in any one song is exceedingly small, and the exercise is always, or nearly always, connected with the manly and clearly scriptural act of standing up and expounding the word to the people; so that it is difficult to trace results to the singing. The very most which can with comprehensive truthfulness be said is that such musical exercises illumine and give variety to the occasion, and so prepare the way for the preacher. The office of *mere melody in music* is benign and helpful to a congregation, without regard particularly to the associated sentiment, the words. It is an attractive adjunct, but not a converting agent. Quite as effective revivals have been held where there was no "singing of the

Gospel,” but only preaching by the aid of the Holy Ghost. There were no Sankeys at Pentecost, nor in the early missionary ages of the Christian era, nor in the Reformation period, nor in the great revival in 1859 in Ireland. Those revivals were equal to any Mr. Moody or Major Whittle ever held. “Singing the Gospel,” while not a modern discovery, yet partakes of the emotional and somewhat unsubstantial type of Christian work characteristic of our times. Any work must lack essential marrow that practically and continually drops out the ordinance of praise. Where the Gospel is “sung” there is generally little or no praise. God is not so much in mind as men. (2) Even if we concede somewhat of good to the use of “Gospel hymns,” those who stand for the ordinance of praise in its purity and entirety, as we do, cannot afford to use them in public service, because (a) they take the actual place of praise to God, which is robbing him for men. We must remember the right of the Lord of the sanctuary. The musical service is not alone, as so many think, for developing good feelings in the singer and in the congregation, but also for presenting to God his due. Praise is worship. Do not forget it. It is as truly so as prayer. We have as much right to sing the Gospel instead of prayer as instead of praise. Praise is more distinctly an act of worship than any other part of the church service. We must not allow any effort to reach men by the Gospel to minimize or supplant the worship offered that Being on whose blessing all our efforts to save men depend. His benevolence will not yield his dues even to Gospel sentiment sung for the benefit of sinners, (b) Because they would take the place of Psalms in the minds of the unthinking. Inevitably our use of “Gospel hymns” would be counted praise and an abandonment of our doctrine of Psalmody. We might explain until we were weary the difference between “praise” and “singing the Gospel,” and would fail of popular impression. The pastor who allows his congregation to preach the Gospel by singing, or any soloist to do so, thereby in the popular mind abandons Scriptural Psalmody. The thinking minds will recognize the difference, but the mass will not see it. No good is to be gained, therefore, as I see it, by the practice, but only injury. I have been asked the question, “Do our Church courts sanction the ‘singing of the Gospel’ in the United Presbyterian churches? If not, why not?” I think I have given in the foregoing the desired answer. I have also been asked, “Is it right at any time in the pulpit to try to touch the feelings of the audience? If so, is it right to employ hymns for that purpose, and yet not use them in the same capacity as Psalms?” I take this to be a somewhat

different thing. It is right to attempt to move the feelings of an audience aright, and the fitting quotation of hymns as poetic sentiment is proper enough. They may be used anywhere, except in what is counted the formal praise of God. Extensive poetic quotations of any sort in the sermon is a rhetorical blunder.

7. It is objected that *churches have flourished greatly which have used hymns*. True; and for all progress of the Gospel we are thankful. However, the numerical argument is never in itself a conclusive one. If it is, the devil has ever since the fall had the argument with him. He will not by and by. Mohammedanism has it now against Christianity; Roman Catholicism has it against Protestantism; Arminianism has it against Calvinism; and the former age of the Church against these last times as to inspired matter of praise, for the day was when almost no hymns were sung. How about superior numbers then proving hymns were wrong? The fact is that truth may be with the minority in any cause. How is it to-day in the battle on temperance? If any one asks particularly how it comes that hymn-singing Churches have progressed more rapidly than Psalm-singing, I can only reply: (1) *That it by no means follows from the use of hymns*. There has been besides the preaching of the Gospel and earnest prayer and very intelligent use of many helpful agencies. (2) That it is always true that God will bless men and Churches which hold error—none are perfect—and which couple with what truth they hold wise, philosophical and businesslike ways of work. (3) No Psalm-singing Churches within the period when the rivalry has been between them and the Churches using hymns have permitted themselves to be perfectly intelligent in their methods of work, in their adaptation to the masses of men, or, until lately, in putting the Psalms into popular modern form. They have called themselves “witness-bearing” Churches, and they have too often borne witness in a very meagre, narrow sort of way. Besides, Scriptural Psalmody has not been permitted to stand by itself on its own merits, but has always been associated with other things, against some of which the wickedness of men has rebelled, and against others the common sense of men. The Psalm-singing Churches have generally antagonized modern revivals, and spent their strength in criticising methods useful to other Churches, and have lost ground, as they ought; they have held to the offensive unwritten tenet of “occasional hearing,” and have even striven to enforce it; they have persisted in

uselessly requiring pieces of lead and bits of pasteboard as passports to the Lord's table; they have made "close communion" both a matter of defense and offense; they have refused choirs, and have persisted in "lining out," and largely declined musical culture; they have held fast to "tables" at communion long after their usefulness has disappeared; they have refused the sound of the harp and organ; they have saddled on, in some of their denominations, specialties of ideal reform and made them terms of communion; they have carried over from the old country all sorts of quarrels that have no more business in this country than the principle of Church "establishment"; and thus in a hundred ways have conspired to make their common denominational specialty, which is Scriptural Psalmody, unpopular. The Psalms have not, since they have had special champions here, been on trial; but the *Psalms and a multitude of other things* by which the Psalter has been hidden from view. It has been practically condemned as a book of praise because of its company. These things are mostly in the past. We have now a magnificent arrangement of the matter of praise, the crudity of the old-time poetry has been largely remedied, and the songs of God are more fully appealing to the people of God upon their merits. The Psalter for the first time since hymns were introduced into this land is having a chance, and there are tokens of popular approbation. 8. *It is objected that we make prayers, and why not hymns and praises?* (I have this question bearing upon the objection: "The Psalms contain many prayers which we believe it proper to sing. If it is proper for uninspired men to pray, why is it improper to sing such prayers as the hymnal has versified?") Observe: (1) *There is a warrant for making prayer*; there is none for making hymns. (2) *Inspiration has furnished Psalms, praises*; it has not furnished prayers. They are to be made as required. (3) *We have the promise of the Spirit for composing our prayers*; but none for composing praises. "Likewise the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought," etc. (4) *If praises and prayer are on precisely the same ground*, praise must be extempore: proper prayer is. There is no warrant for liturgical prayers. However, the hymn-singing denominations do not leave their people to extemporize praises—they give them a hymn-book, i. e., *they recognize the difference* between prayer and praise. (5) *More fundamentally, prayer and praise are two distinct things*—quite as much so as preaching and praise. Yet preaching may contain some elements of praise in it, and also of prayer, (a) In praise

there is a musical ordering of the voice; prayer is only simple articulation, or even a mental address, (b) Prayer is chiefly the presentation of requests, confession of sins, thanksgiving for mercies; praise is generally the heralding of divine excellencies, glory as displayed in creation, providence and redemption. In inspired Psalmody may be found matter which might elsewhere enter into prayer; but specifically in its place in the Psalms it is psalmody; it is not prayer. It is not offered as prayer. It is offered as a tribute to God. If a given composition were mere prayer it would not be musically offered. Praise is cast into permanent forms; it is not so with prayer; and so cast alike to express the feelings of worship and to arouse them, and to be a coin of worship ready at hand which God will receive. The primary reference of praise is to God. The primary reference of prayer is to the wants of man. Praise is permanent because God is unchangeable, but prayer partakes of the mutable condition of men. To come close to the question propounded, as to why we sing the praises of God in inspired prayers and not in those of uninspired men, you will note: A. That the forms of prayer in the Psalter are not really prayers. They are inspired praises in the form of prayer. B. The prayers which men compose and offer as praises are not inspired, not appointed as praises. This makes a vast difference between the prayers of the Psalter and those of the hymnbook. If, however, any one wishes to pray to God in metre of human composition, there is no objection; however, he is not to count it praise, it will not be praise, because he sings it; nor will the fact that the Psalms are sometimes in forms of prayer be an authorized precedent. He lacks inspiration, and has no commission to provide psalmody for himself or any one else. 9. *The Psalms are Jewish*, hence not suited to the Gospel dispensation. One high-spirited divine, in a convention for the union of the Presbyterian Churches, when biblical Psalmody was proposed, with some asperity dissented, saying: "No, sir, I am not a Jew. I am a Christian, sir, and this is a Christian convention, and the Churches represented here are Christian Churches." So, because he was a Christian, he was not satisfied with the hymns which satisfied Christ. He is a specimen of many good men who misconceive things. Did you ever think of it, all our salvation is Jewish? The Church of this dispensation is on a Jewish model. The Saviour was a Jew. The apostles were all Jews. The Bible is a Jewish book, from beginning to end, not a Gentile syllable in it. Even Luke writes his Gospel as he received it from Paul. The mass of the New Testament is touched and colored by the Old Testament, or Jewish

Scriptures. What a Jew Peter was in his epistles! How fully does the epistle to the Romans follow upon Jewish lines and deal with Old Testament personages and types! Who does not know that the epistle to the Hebrews is saturated with Jewish thought? Everywhere throughout the New Testament you have altars and sacrifices, and priests and prophets, and Jewish history and Jewish characters, until at the end the grand Revelation closes with descriptions borrowed from the Old Testament prophets, Ezekiel and Daniel. In some of the New Testament books there is as much, or more, distinctly Jewish thought as in the Psalms. However, the objection is not as serious in the minds of our friends as they suppose, judging from their own hymn-books; e. g., in one of the Methodist books we find many such words as these:

"Thou very Paschal Lamb,
Whose blood for us was shed.
Through whom we out of bondage came.
Thy ransomed people led."

Also,

"Thy offering still continues new,
Thy vesture keeps its crimson hue,
Thy priesthood still remains the same."

Take even old Coronation, v. 3,

"Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,
Ye ransomed from the fall.
Hail Him who saves you by His grace.
And crown Him Lord of all."

Again,

"Our pilgrim hosts shall safely land
On Canaan's peaceful shore."

Again,

"On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye.
To Canaan's fair and happy land,
Where my possessions lie."

Also,

"Here I'll raise my Ebenezer,
Hither by Thy help I've come."

Or,

"You daughters of Zion, declare, have you seen
The star that on Israel shone?
Say, if in your tents my beloved hath been
And where with His flocks He has gone."

Or,

"The roses of Sharon, the lilies that grow.
The cedars of Lebanon bow at His feet."

Or,

"Let us sing the King Messiah.
King of righteousness and peace."

Or,

"Shout the glad tidings, exultantly sing,
Jerusalem triumphs, Messiah is King."

Or,

"Hallelujah to the Lamb who bled for our pardon,
We'll praise Him again when we pass over Jordan."

Or,

"Before Thine altar, Lord,
My harp and song shall sound."

So it goes; at the opening of the book you can find it until we almost feel constrained to say, "What Jews these hymn-singers are!" The fact is, all such objections are captious, and are offered for lack of something better. In the light of the New Testament, these Old Testament Psalms, all of which refer to the Messiah and his sufferings in the past tense, are as truly "Gospel

hymns” as the Romans and Hebrews are books of the larger Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

10. *It is complained that the Psalms are obscure and hard to be understood.* So is the arithmetic, so is the grammar; shall we, therefore, throw them out of school and substitute something that can never usefully take their place? Is religion the shallowest thing under heaven, and must it appeal chiefly to the shallows of the mind? The Romish Church puts in the same plea and removes the whole Bible from the common people. The Psalms are not so obscure as the Book of Romans. Shall we, therefore, set it aside? There are some hard things in Peter’s epistles; shall we, therefore, have an expurgated edition? It is thought that the Psalter is too difficult for the children. How about the whole Bible? Shall the ordinance of praise alone be whittled down to the measure of babyhood? Were the children of the early Psalm-singing Churches less biblically and spiritually cultivated because they did not have little soft and sappy religious songs? Is childhood to be brought into divine experiences by weak and attenuated, utterly slimy, pious ditties? In point of fact, is the childhood of other Churches more spiritually vigorous than our own? What rings in your thoughts when away by yourself, and what springs to your lips when you need an apt quotation on a religious subject so readily as these metre Psalms! And they beget in children a sense of reverence for the great God, and an impression of his gracious majesty that a world full of children’s hymn books would fail to awaken; and there are few things so desirable as that the proper views of God be given the youthful mind. No book of God’s Word is as easily understood and so readily leaves an impression as these Hebrew Psalms.

11. *Some of the Psalms are so full of cursings and maledictions that a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ can hardly use them.* Just so! Observe: (1) This charge is not really against the Psalms, but their author. Who is he? Not merely David. He is not wholly their author. They are not responsible for themselves, but the Holy Ghost is. The objector may feel comfortable in his position, but it is not flattering to his piety. (2) One is not called to sing the severe parts every day, but they are there to be used when necessary, and the Church of God has had such necessities, when the Devil and his forces have assaulted it for purposes of death and extinction of the faith. Yet not

simply as persons, but as followers of Christ and members of his Church on earth are we to sing them; and at such times of persecution it is right to sing and pray for overthrow of the Lord's enemies, and that the curse of the Lord may fall upon them. The man that has any vim and hearty loyalty in his piety will not indulge in any sentimentalism about not invoking the right hand of God Almighty and his vindicatory justice in defense of his own!

Did not Paul say in the New Testament, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be the anathema maranatha"? "Alexander, the coppersmith, did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works." We are to sing of mercy and judgment. The people of God had use for the "cursing Psalms" in the past, and will again. Where will you find a hymn with backbone enough for a time of persecution? (3) The moral law was as truly in force in David's time as now. If it is wrong to sing these Psalms now, it was then. Yet for this purpose the Holy Ghost gave them. (4) These very Psalms which excite hyper-evangelical sentimental criticism are quoted with approbation in the New Testament. (Acts 1:16, 20.) "They were given by the Holy Ghost as showing the cruelty and malignity of the foes of Christ and his petitions and judgments against them."

12. *Somehow I cannot feel it is wrong to sing hymns* This objector is a hopeless case. If a man will not use his brains in his religion, Psalm-singers cannot do much for him, nor yet consistent hymn-singers. If any man is convinced that the weight of scriptural argument demands Scripture Psalmody, he is not at liberty to follow his feelings. He is to follow what appear to him to be the teachings of revealed truth. He is not to be a law unto himself. The argument for the Psalms is objective, it lies outside the singers; it is not subjective, spun from their inner selves. Whenever the latter process, subjectivizing, is largely adopted, men get away from the authority of God, the dicta of revelation, and become a law unto themselves. Some men refuse the foreknowledge by God of free actions because they cannot feel it to be possible; yet the Word of God is clear on it. Some refuse the doctrine of strict divine justice to sinners in the face of revelation because it does not consist with their ideas of God. Some determine by their own feelings whether certain writings are inspired. And so it goes. The feelings are a very variable and contradictory guide. It is the rationalizing processes of the feelings which create so many views and

schisms in the Church. Loyalty to the revealed truth is demanded. “Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness.” If men sing hymns on what they believe to be Scriptural grounds, their behavior merits what it receives—candid, exegetical consideration; but if men act in anything from mere feeling, they put themselves outside the canons of Christian judgment and controversy. Mere mysticism can play no part in determining the will of God.

IV. Supplementary objections to hymns

These are numerous, but having been so full in the treatment of the main points, I have time for only two or three.

1. *A chief source of error in the Christian Church has been human hymns.* Because the Psalms were orthodox on the Trinity and on the Deity of Christ, the early Gnostics introduced their own compositions in praise. History shows that Mariolatry came into popularity in precisely the same way. Hymns began in a purpose to inculcate error. They have by no means always been so used, but as an agency in the promulgation of evil doctrine they have never been surpassed. Melody and rhyme readily sing sentiment into people's minds. Congregations that used to sing:

"And while the lamp holds out to burn
The vilest sinner may return,"

did not believe much in the sin against the Holy Ghost, and that there were persons for whom we ought not to pray.

"I want to be an angel, and with the angels stand,
A crown upon my forehead, a harp within my hand,"

had a great deal to do with giving currency to the nonsense that saved men become angels when they die. The Presbyterian Church revised its hymn book in 1838, partly because it contained some hymns that were "incorrect in doctrine." Every heresy has had its hymns, and every hymn book under the sky contains more or less that is untrue. This is true by the consent of very many who believe in "human composures" as matter of praise. Over against this fact we place the Psalms, and say, "Look at them! Which of you convinces them of sin?" They are God's truth, and fit to make perfect the soul. Moreover, much song of human composition is not by any possibility praise to God, and has been a chief source of prevalent error as to what praise in the sanctuary really is. Here are two or three specimens:

"Vital spark of heavenly flame.
Quit, O quit, this mortal frame";

which is a song to the soul by Alexander Pope, the deist. Or,

"Spirit, leave thy house of clay,"

which is another of the same type,

"Thou art gone to the grave,
But we will not deplore thee,"

which is a poetic address to a dead friend, as is

"Sister, thou wast mild and lovely."

What can such songs do so well and thoroughly as to vitiate our very conceptions of praise? Closely allied is another objection. 2. Hymns are the means of fostering sectarianism. Every sect has its own peculiar hymns as well as those common to the hymn-singing Churches. They teach the distinctive tenets of their sects. It is impossible to construct a hymnal without sectarian bias. Yet sectarianism is not as such desirable. So far as the Psalms are concerned. Psalm-singers are not sectarian. They have the one true union hymn book and unquestionably do not sing specifically United Presbyterian or other denominational doctrine, but the pure praises of God. It is more than doubtful if the proper conception of praise to God will allow it to be employed as a means, even incidentally, of inculcating sectarian views of the Gospel, and thus promoting dissensions in the body of Christ. If there is any place where men ought to unite, it is in praising God. The fitting means for doing so is the Book he has given. Here we close, and looking into the better future with high hopes, may we not approve the words of another: "The Book of Psalms is a vase of perfume, broken on the steps of the temple, and shedding abroad its odors to the heart of all humanity; the little shepherd has become the master of the sacred choir of the universe"?

Added note on the law of worship

What is not commanded in essential worship is forbidden. To make clear the application of what is to follow, we will define sufficiently for our purpose what is meant by worship: It is the offering of spiritual service to God in the use of prayer, praise, the preaching of the Word, and the sacraments. The doctrine to be taught is. That the commands of God authorizing, directing, and defining these exclude all rivals. His commandments are prohibitions of all else. They limit the worshiper to what is prescribed. In presenting this general truth note:

I. God has a right to direct his own worship. He alone infallibly knows what he is willing to receive. His is the prerogative to prescribe the method of approach into his holy presence. It is the right of creatorship, sovereignty, and exalted character.

II. The Confession of Faith recognizes this right. Chap. I., Sec. 6, says: The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory and man's salvation, faith and life is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture; unto which nothing is to be at any time added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men." Chap. XXL, Sec. I: "But the acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will that he may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or in any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures." Here is alleged not only God's right to prescribe, but it is indicated that what is not commanded in essential worship is forbidden. L. C, Question 109: "The sins forbidden in the Second Commandment are all devising, counselling, using, and in any wise approving any religious worship not instituted by God himself." Also L. C. 108 and S. Cat. 51.

III. The Confession of Faith, while declaring that to God belongs the prerogative of appointing and regulating worship, nevertheless recognizes a range of acts left to the judgment of men. These are details, incidentals.

Conf. I., 6: “There are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and government of the Church common to human actions and societies which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed.” It is to be carefully noted, however, that there is no room allowed for invention and use in the sphere of worship itself. The sphere of human origination does not touch praise, the channel of prayer, the sacraments, and such like primal and fundamental prescriptions. We are thus particular, because within this narrow margin of incidentals and details alone is found the only confessional recognition of any province of man to originate in matters of faith and worship. When men say they are permitted to originate somewhat in matters of worship, the Confession meets them with a limitation to nonessential circumstances, details, and conveniences. Worship itself is directed and prescribed by God.

We have said it is the province of God to prescribe in essential worship, and now proceed to say further:

IV. That God has historically prescribed his own worship. Whence came the regulations for Israel’s sacrifices and oblations, the whole round of ceremonial? From God. Whence, particularly, the law for the offering of incense, and the laws of the Passover and circumcision? From God. Whence the order and material of temple praise? From God, through inspired men. Whence the New Testament method of coming to the mercy-seat in the offering of acceptable prayer? From God. Whence the sacrament of the Supper? From God. Baptism? From God. The ordinance of preaching? From God. So we may proceed. God has actually asserted and exercised the prerogative of specifying and regulating his worship. He has not left it to fallen and incompetent men. Had they been competent he would not, perhaps, in every important feature have taken it out of their hands and retained it in his own. But they are not so.

V. He has formally announced his right to prescribe worship, and advertised penalties against all interference with this prerogative. Deut. 4:2: “Ye shall not add unto the word which I commanded you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.” Deut. 12 132: “What thing soever I

command you, observe to do it; thou shalt not add thereto or diminish from it.” Then, moreover, in the New Testament we read (Mark 7:7-13): “But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” Penalty for disobedience has sometimes been inflicted. Lev. 10:1, 2 records how two of Aaron’s sons, priests, were smitten dead for offering strange fire (not from the altar) in presenting incense. They were not in so many terms forbidden to do it, but the general command was to take fire from the altar. As the account is rendered in the Revised Version the thought is plain, “Which the Lord did not command them.” The absence of command in their case sadly enough was prohibition. Jeroboam’s act in erecting calves at Dan and Bethel and an altar at Bethel, and in fixing a feast on the 15th day of the eighth month, when the law required it to be held on the 15th day of the seventh month at Jerusalem, is another case in point. The record of the divine view of the matter is in I Kings, chap. 12:30: “And this thing became a sin.” And in v. 3s “So he offered upon the altar which he made in Bethel, the 15th day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart.” The primal thing God disliked was the “devising of his own heart.” The other sins were consequences of this one. The thing Jeroboam did was the very thing Moses declined to do—change the time of a divinely appointed festival. Certain people by ceremonial defilement were excluded from the Passover. They asked relief. Moses said he would ask the Lord. Num. 9:8-10. And the Lord did not say, “Do as seems good,” but himself fixed another day for the worship of such defiled people. Both by expression of his will and by affixing penalty God claims to prescribe his own worship. He may not always inflict the penalty, but the examples of punishment for infringement upon this province have but one voice.

VI. The Lord’s commandment excludes all else. It marks and defines human duty. It is not the expression of preference. It is not advisory. It does not leave it at the option of the worshiper to disregard the divine prescription and substitute something else. If so, why should there be any commandment? God has defined the method of prayer through Christ. We are, therefore, not at liberty to use another mediator. He has fixed a pair of sacraments as channels of grace. We are surely not at liberty to employ others of our own devising. Why do we condemn Rome’s other five but for this reason? He has given an ordinance of praise and a volume of praises.

These are commanded. Can we say that other compositions are not forbidden? Not unless we can say the same thing of all other possible items of worship. The plain truth is that a divine commandment is exclusive of all else. It occupies the whole territory. Hence, the lawful infringement upon one feature of God's prerogative to command indicates human right everywhere to set aside. Yet he has said, "Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." Deut. 4:2, 12, 32. If one may employ other than the commanded praises, he may employ other methods of prayer, other sacraments, and other sacred books for preaching. The Jews might have offered a variety of unclean animals in sacrifice, devised additions to the ritual of the temple, widened out the priesthood beyond Aaron's family, and have become in general ecclesiastical revolutionists.

So may any churchman or Church. He may do anything he pleases if he adopts the notion that what is not commanded is not forbidden, and that he may, therefore, freely use it. The dictum, "What is not commanded is forbidden," is one of those plain, logical categories men ought readily to see. It is a compact statement of both the affirmative and negative of a proposition. Affirmation in such a case as this involves the negative of everything which might dispute the field. The command to "offer a bullock for a burnt offering" includes the negatives, "Thou shalt not offer a cow or a swine." The command to sing God's Psalms in worship includes the negative, "Thou shalt not sing human songs in the worship of God."

VII. The application of this principle to Psalmody is plain: 1. God's songs are commanded in both Testaments as matter of praise. 2. Nothing else is commanded. 3. The use of human songs in God's worship is in usurpation of the rights of the compositions inspired by God himself, and not being commanded is forbidden.

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