

# AN ESSAY ON PSALMODY

by William Romaine

*"Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people: sing unto him, sing Psalms unto him." —1 Chron. 16:8, 9.*

## PREFACE

IN the service of the church of England there is great use made of the Psalms. They are read in every day's service, both at morning and evening prayer, and are constantly sung in public worship. It is much to be wished they were better understood, that the daily reading and singing of them might be the means of grace. Very few, it is to be feared, receive the profit from them, which, as an ordinance of God, they were intended to administer. I have long seen the design of them greatly mistaken, and have long lamented the contempt put upon them. At last I have been persuaded to try to make the subject of these divine hymns plain and clear, and to restore the singing of them in the congregation to their primitive usefulness. This is my present attempt. Success in it depends on help from God. He revealed the book of Psalms, and he alone can make the singing of them profitable. I hope he will. May he accompany my well-meant performance with his presence, and prosper it with his grace. If it bring any honour to his holy name and word, thanks be to him. If anybody reads it, and is stirred up to sing more and better; if our public singing of Psalms be reformed, and become in the least like the great concert of saints and angels, this will be altogether his doing; may he have all his praise. I deserve none, being only in his church and service what he is pleased to make me. Through his grace I wish to live to his glory, and to be useful in my day to his cause and interest. Help me, reader, to exalt him in life and death. May it be thy happiness to do the same; for which thou hast the hearty prayer of thy servant in him,

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MEN AND BRETHREN,—We are the creatures of God, dependent on him for being and for well-being. He gives us all our faculties, both of mind and body, and he requires us to use them in his service, and to his glory. This is our bounden duty. It is the peculiar dignity of man, who never acts more nobly than when he employs the powers bestowed upon him to the praise of the giver. None of them should be useless, but each should be exerted, whenever an opportunity offers of glorifying God.

In the common actions of life, this may and should be done: the rule is, "Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God;" but it is far more needful in spiritual matters, which have an immediate relation to God and his worship. These he has appointed to be the means of showing forth his praise. Among them singing of Psalms is not the least. It is frequently commanded, and with a promise—faithful is he who hath promised—he will render the means effectual to answer the end. When believers employ the faculties of soul and body in singing of his goodness and greatness, he does accept the service, and testifies his acceptance. He does indeed communicate to them, by his Spirit, joy and peace, and he renders singing to the Lord, with melody in the heart, the means of increasing the melody and joy.

But where is such singing? In what church? Among what people? There are some. May their number increase. It is worthwhile to try to increase them, especially as this ordinance is so much neglected. The holy affections, which should be stirred up by so heavenly an exercise, are generally damped by it. When it is performed with coldness and indifference, how can it produce sensations suitable to such exalted means of grace? Or when contempt is put upon it, how can it convey any of the promised blessings?

Many things have contributed to the present neglect and abuse of this ordinance, and I have been led to the following reflection, in order to try to bring it again into repute. Happy, indeed, shall I think myself, if the Lord should be pleased to make use of them, as any way conducive to the singing of his praises with the understanding; I shall pray and labour for it: may he give his abundant blessing.

One of the first and great causes of neglecting the singing of Psalms seems to have arisen from not attending to:

## CHAPTER I.

### *The Subject of the Book of Psalms.*

THE testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy: for to him give all the prophets witness. With one voice they speak of his wonderful person, of his divine undertakings, and of his complete and eternal salvation. It is the spirit of their writings to reveal and to teach the good knowledge of the Lord. Whoever understands them perfectly, will find the prophets treating of the coming of Immanuel in the flesh, as clearly as the evangelists. When this most blessed event was to be accomplished in the fulness of time, a New Testament witness, filled with the Holy Ghost, prophesied, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath according to his promise visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began." The Lord never left himself without witness. Ever since the world began, he had prophets, who foretold what Christ was to be and to do, who testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow

This is the subject of the book of Psalms. It treats of Christ, and contains the praises of the Father's love, and of the Spirit's grace, as they were manifested in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The salvation of sinners through him is the greatest display of the covenant mercies of the eternal Three: therefore the Psalms celebrate his wonderful person, and his divine undertakings—they describe his obedience and sufferings—his conflicts with, and victories over, all his enemies—his resurrection and ascension—his sitting upon the throne, the great king of all worlds, visible and invisible—his gathering together, and perfecting the number of his elect—his coming at the last day to judge men and angels—and the glory which he will bestow upon his redeemed, when they shall be with him and like him, kings and priests unto God and his Father, and will reign with him for ever.

What subject can be more noble in itself than this: here are the greatest transactions of the greatest personages that possibly can be—the ever blessed Trinity purposing and covenanting to bring many sons to glory—displaying their wisdom, and love, and power, in an infinite degree, through the incarnation, obedience, and sufferings of the God-man, Jehovah Jesus, and through the effectual grace of the Holy Spirit, calling and bringing the elect to experience the Father's love to them by faith in the Son's perfect salvation, and then guiding them safe by his council and might unto the glory provided for them. This wonderful theme is treated of in the book of Psalms in a manner suitable to its dignity—it is not only spoken of, but also celebrated—not merely described, but also praised. The language therefore is exalted. The sentiments are sublime, the poetry is divine. And no wonder; the author is equal to the subject. He is capable of extolling the mercies of that covenant, which reaches from eternity to eternity; and of extolling them according to their true greatness. The Psalms are the composition of the all-wise Spirit: for the Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of David, and of the other inspired penmen. He guided both their hearts and their hands. The sentiments and the words are his: for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost—they spake as he moved them—they indited the Psalms under his inspiration. The praises therein given of the person and work of the ever blessed Immanuel are not human, but truly divine. What may not be expected from such an author? Who is by essential union one in the Godhead with the Father and the Son, and who is by his office to testify of Jesus, and to glorify Jesus. If the Psalms be read under his influence, they will be found equal to the subject, in every view suited to exalt the incarnate God, and if they be sung with grace in the heart, they will increase the faith and hope of every devout worshipper. There are several Psalms which are applicable to none but Jesus Christ, and many expressions which could not be truly spoken by any one but by him who was God and man in one Christ. Many will receive new lustre and emphasis, when viewed in the same light. The proper Psalms, which are appointed to be read on the festivals, do certainly treat of the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Christ, and of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, in consequence of Christ's ascension: for, says he, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go away, I will send him unto you." Our reformers certainly understood those proper Psalms to be descriptive of Christ, and took them in the same sense our Lord and his apostles did; who have quoted the book of Psalms eighty-two times. Their manner of quoting it demonstrates, that they took it for granted it was written concerning Christ. Indeed many passages cannot be applied to any one, but to him: for instance—he appeals to God to be tried according to his innocence—to be rewarded according to his righteousness—he desires to be judged according to the cleanness of his heart and hands—could any one of us say, "Search me to the bottom, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any way of wickedness in me?" All have sinned. All we like sheep have gone astray, and if we were to be tried according to the holy law by a heart-searching God, every mouth would be stopped, and all the world would become guilty before him. Oh what would become of the rest of us, if God was to judge us as we are! The 119th Psalm is a description of the love of Christ to the law, his study in it and his perfect observance of it. Oh what love have I unto thy law—with my whole heart have I sought thee—I have not departed from my judgments—"I have sworn"

(with the oath, of the covenant) "and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments." Are not these the peculiar descriptions of the work of the God-man, in which he was alone, and of the people there was none with him—any more than there was in the offering for sin, when he trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him, of which the 40th Psalm treats—any more than there was in bringing in everlasting righteousness, for which the church praises him in several Psalms, particularly in 71, and will triumph in his righteousness, and in his only, for evermore. The glory is his. No offering, no righteousness, but his can save: the praises therefore of the great salvation of our God, which run through the book of Psalms, are the peculiar prerogatives of the King of saints. They are his crown and diadem. The honours are solely his, and he will wear them with unrivalled fame. His name is King of kings, and Lord of lords, and the armies of heaven follow him with one mind and one heart, ascribing unto him honour and glory, and blessing and praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

But although the work was altogether his from first to last, none being capable of any part, but he who is God as well as man; yet, eternal blessings on him! He did it for us and for our salvation. His people have an interest in what he is—God in our nature—they have their share in what he did and suffered for them, and they have an unspeakable benefit in what he is now doing for them in the presence of the Father. By believing, they have pardon and peace through his offering on the tree. By believing, they put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and find acceptance in his righteousness. By believing, they commit their persons and concerns into his hands, and he ever liveth their prevailing intercessor to obtain for them every needful blessing. Thus they learn to trust him, and in trusting to experience his faithfulness. He gives them cause to love him, and to rejoice in him. For having received a new birth and life in him, they can sing the Psalms of his nativity, and join angels and men in ascribing glory in the highest to the incarnate God. They read of his dying love in several Psalms, and they worship him for bearing their sins, and shame, and curse, in his body and soul upon the cross: the lamb that was slain, and redeemed them to God by his blood is the constant theme of their grateful songs. When they read or sing the Psalms of his resurrection they look upon him as the firstfruits of the dead, the earnest of the whole harvest, and with grateful hearts they bless him for making and for keeping them alive to God. They share in all his victories and triumphs, being his happy subjects; for he has a kingdom, which is celebrated in many of the Psalms. These treat of his almighty power to rule all beings and things; and of the sweet sceptre of his love, by which he governs his willing people. He manifests to them the greatness and majesty of his kingdom, so that under his royal protection they find deliverance from the temptations to sin, and from the miseries of sin, and through his special love he gives them here in the kingdom of his grace a happiness, which all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them cannot possibly give. They live happy indeed; for he makes them sing of the good of his chosen; they do rejoice in the gladness of his nation, and they glory in his inheritance. These are high privileges, but they are only the earnest of that kingdom which endureth for ever. Oh what glorious things are spoken of thee, thou city of God, in which the great king delighteth to dwell, and to manifest his glory. Wonderful things are written of his everlasting kingdom in the book of Psalms with which his happy subjects mix faith, and can then sing them with a hope full of glory and immortality. The Psalms throughout so describe the king of saints that they who partake of his grace may find in them continual exercise of their faith, and continual improvement of it; for they have an interest in all he was, and in all he is. Was his trust in God unshaken? They hope he will make theirs steadfast. Was his walk holy, harmless, and undefiled? They depend on him for strength to tread in his steps. Were his tempers perfectly holy? They admire his example, and through his Spirit they daily put off the old man, and put on the new. Was he carried through the greatest sufferings with entire resignation? They look up under all their trials for his promised support. Has he all his enemies under his feet? They are waiting in joyful hope for the fruit of his conquest. Is he now in our nature in the highest glory? It is promised them, their eyes shall see the king in his beauty. Oh blessed prospect! They shall soon be with him, and like him too, when they shall see him as he is. The Psalms are so written of Christ, that every believer may find comfort in what he reads or sings. Christ being the head of the body the church, all the members do share with their head in what he is and has, in his incarnation, life and death, resurrection and intercession, yea, they shall live and reign with him for ever and ever. That my meaning may be better understood, I will give an instance in the first Psalm. Let us consider, how it is to be understood of Christ, and in what manner it is useful to those, who, through faith, are with Christ.

As it treats of Christ, it is a proper preface to the whole book. It gives an account of the subject, and is an abridgment of it, containing in substance what is largely handled in the other parts. For Christ is here described under the character of that perfect person, who was to retrieve for his people all the losses of the fall. He was in their nature, and yet he was by nature and practice, in heart and life, separate from sinners; negatively he had not the least communion with them, being without one spot of sin, positively he was perfectly holy. He fulfilled all the righteousness of the law in its highest requirements, both in obedience to its precepts and also in suffering its penalties. Thus he became to his people the tree of life, having life in himself, as God self-existent, and having life communicatively, as God-man, to bestow upon every branch in him.—"I am the vine," says he, "ye are the branches;" by him they are quickened, in him they live, through him they become fruitful, and by his influence they prosper and bring forth much fruit to the glory of God.

Herein they are directly contrary to the wicked, who are never quickened by him, but left to perish in their sins.

## PSALM 1.

1. Successful are the steps of that person, who never walks in the counsel of transgressors, and in the way of sinners never stands, and in the seat of mockers never sits.
2. But in the law of Jehovah is his delight, and in his law will he meditate day and night.
3. For then he shall be like a tree that was planted by the streams of waters, which will yield its fruits in their season, and its top-shoot shall never fade, but whatsoever he shall take in hand he shall be able to make it prosperous.
4. It shall not be so with transgressors, but they shall be like the chaff which the wind blows away.
5. Because the transgressors shall not be set up in judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
6. For Jehovah acknowledgeth the way of the righteous, but the way of sinners shall be destroyed.

This Psalm is a general description of the success of Jesus in his work, showing what steps he was to take for the salvation of his people: he was to be a man like us in all things, excepting sin; from which he was perfectly free: no thought of it ever entered his mind, not one moment did he decline from the way of duty, but always acted under the influence of divine love, in his life, and by his example, reprovng those who made a mock at sin. He was holy, harmless, and undefiled in his nature, and separate from sinners in his practice: for

He was perfectly acquainted with the divine law: it was his continual study, and to obey it was his continual delight. It was his meat and drink—"Lo, I come," says he, "to do thy will, O God." He rejoiced to fulfil its precepts by his life, and he was a willing sacrifice to suffer its penalties in his death. In both he magnified the law, and made it infinitely honourable. And,

Thus it became him to bring many sons unto glory. Whatsoever he undertook for them had perfect success. He was the tree of life watered with abundant streams of grace, the Spirit being given not by measure unto him; a tree subject to no change, but always growing and flourishing, always bearing forth fruit, and making every branch in it a partaker of the heavenly influences of the stock upon which it grows.

But the transgressors, who are not grafted into him by faith, have no spiritual life or fruit—they are lighter than vanity itself: and they shall be driven from the judgment seat of God, as easily as any light chaff is driven about by a strong wind, and they shall be justly banished for evermore from the general assembly and church of the first born.

For Jehovah always approved of the way of the righteous, whom he chose and called, and justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, but the way of transgressors he disapproves, and they shall soon utterly perish.

In this sense the Psalm is true of Christ, but believers have their share in the blessings of which it treats; for in his success they partake. They have fellowship with him in every step which he took to work out their salvation. When they have redemption through faith in his blood, and free acceptance through faith in his righteousness, then they walk humbly with him, and he puts his fear within them. He teaches them to depart from evil, they do not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful.

But he puts his law in their inward parts, and writes it in their hearts; in their renewed mind they are brought to delight in it; they make it their continual study, and through grace to walk in it as their continual practice. Yea, they live by the faith of the Son of God, as branches in the tree of life; because he lives they shall live also; drawing from their life-giving root everything needful to mortify sin in them, and to enable them to bring forth fruit unto God.

Thus he separates them from transgressors, who live and die in their sins: these are like chaff; which the wind driveth away.

Because they shall not stand in the judgment of God, nor come into the church of Christ.

For the Lord with his loving-kindness regarded the way of the righteous, but the way of transgressors shall perish.

Thus believers look upon the Psalms. They consider them as treating of the glorious person and work of the God-man, and considering themselves in him as members under him their head, quickened by his Spirit, and receiving all the blessings of spiritual life out of his fulness, they can understand and sing the praises of Immanuel, with melody in their hearts; for they can apply to themselves the benefits of his atonement and righteousness, of his intercession and glory, and this renders the Psalms precious, and singing them an high ordinance. Their God does meet them and bless them in singing Psalms. While they express their love to him he communicates his love to them, and they have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ by the Spirit.

But this will be more evident from considering some particulars relating to the subject; such as:

## CHAPTER II.

### *The Scripture Names of the Psalms.*

THERE are three Hebrew names often used in the titles of the Psalms, which the Septuagint have translated Psalms, Hymns, and Songs. The word rendered by them hymns is *Thehilim*, which is the running title to this book, expressive of the general design, and is an abridgement of the whole matter. It comes from a Hebrew word, that signifies the brisk motion of light, shining and putting its splendour upon any object, and this makes it bright and illustrious. Hence comes the propriety of the word, as it is used to praise, which is to set an object in the light; that the rays shining upon it may render it splendid and beautiful and thereby glorious and praiseworthy. Such are the Psalms. They are rays of light—enlighteners, (if I might use such a word, and it is the literal sense of the Hebrew hymns) intended to manifest the glory of the person, and to show forth the praises of the work of God-Jesus; for light, in its various uses in nature, is the appointed emblem of the Lord Christ. He is distinguished by this name throughout the Old Testament; and he applied all the passages to himself in the New, when he declared—"I am the light of the world"—"I am not only the Creator of light in the material world, but also in the spiritual world—darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people, until I, the light of life, arise upon their souls: and when I come with healing in my rays, in that day shall the deaf hear my words, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness."

Jesus gives eyes to see with, and light to see by; he opens the eyes of the understanding, and makes spiritual objects visible, so that, whoever is enlightened with saving knowledge, has it all from him, and it should all lead to him. He is the bright day-star which shines throughout the volume of revelation, but in no part with clearer rays than in the book of Psalms. Here he is exalted in his meridian glory; for the whole scripture does not give greater light into what he was to be, and to do, and to suffer, his life, his temper, his employment from his tender age until his crucifixion, than is to be found in those divine hymns; nor are there any more full descriptions of his passion, death, resurrection, ascension and his kingdom which ruleth over all. In the Psalms, he himself read and meditated day and night, while he was growing in wisdom and stature. And in them will every true believer meditate, that he may have more of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, as it shines in the person of Jesus Christ.

As the eyes of his understanding are more enlightened with this saving truth, he will more happily enjoy in his heart the benefits of the humiliation and exaltation of the incarnate Jehovah. May this, reader, be thy happy case; may every Psalm be as the shining light, leading thee to a growing knowledge of Jesus, and shining on clearer still until the perfect day.

*Zemer* is another Hebrew word which the Septuagint translates Psalms; as a verb, it signifies to cut and prune trees; as a noun, it is a branch cut off, and pruned, and by way of eminence, the Branch, the man whose name is the Branch, who was known and distinguished by this title in the scripture. He was the eternal God, and he was in the fulness of time to be made flesh, and to cut off, but not for himself. This was the great transaction in the everlasting covenant—"Thus saith the Lord of hosts, *Zech. 3:7,8*. Behold I will bring forth my servant, the Branch," the promised branch which was to spring from the root of Jesse; and again, *Zech. 6:12,13*, "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts: Behold the man whose name is the Branch, and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord, [in which the Godhead shall reside] even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory and shall sit and shall rule upon his throne and he shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be upon them both," between Jehovah and the Branch; for the Branch having grown up in his place was in the temple of his body to ratify the counsel of peace; he was to establish it in his life, and to fulfil it in his death, and having by dying conquered death, and him that

had the power of death, he was to rebuild the temple of the Lord, as he said unto the Jews, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it up;" which he fulfilled by building up the temple of his body natural, and thereby he demonstrated that he will in due time perfectly complete the temple of his body mystical, which is his church; for he is a head to all his members. He quickens them by his grace, and actuates them by his influence. By union with him they live, by communion with him they grow. His Spirit breathes through the church, which is his body, and enables the members to grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ; whereby he teaches them, and it is a great part of their growth, how to acknowledge their obligations with increasing humility to their glorified head. He renders the salvation of Jesus finished upon the cross, the sweet subject of their spiritual song. His dying love they would keep ever in mind; they would have it always warm upon their hearts, and always upon their tongues. His passion on the tree is their never ceasing theme; God forbid, say they, that we should glory, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. In this they glory, and in this alone, with their voices, and with every musical instrument; but chiefly with the melody of their hearts, they endeavour to praise him who was slain, and hath redeemed them unto God by his blood. It becometh them well in the house of their pilgrimage, thus to sing the triumphs of the worthy lamb; for it is to be in their Father's house the most blessed subject of their endless song. The ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of angels, and the great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, harping with their golden harps, in full concert join in praising the crucified Immanuel, "Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honour and glory, and blessing. Amen. Hallelujah."

There is another Hebrew word, *Sher*, which the Septuagint constantly render a Song, frequently applied to the Psalms. It signifies rule and government, and is used for any principality among men. Hence it is very properly spoken of him whose kingdom ruleth over all. The Prince of peace is one of his high titles. He is called the Prince of the kings of the earth; a Prince for ever—of whose government and peace there shall be no end. To this empire he had an unalienable and indefeasible right, being in the one Jehovah possessed of the same perfections with the father and the Holy Spirit. But the most common view in which the Psalms consider him, is that of the God-man, King-mediator, whose principality is the most glorious reign of grace. He sits upon his throne freely to bestow all divine blessings upon his redeemed, and he is Messiah the prince who was raised to his kingdom by the covenant of the eternal Three; in which he engaged to be a surety for his people, and in their nature, and in their stead, to satisfy all the offended attributes of the Father, by his holy life and death, and the Father engaged to give him a kingdom with all power in heaven and earth. Accordingly in the fulness of time he was manifested in the flesh, and for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. He is greatly exalted, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. The once crucified is now the enthroned Jesus, King of kings, and Lord of lords, almighty to save his people from all their sins, and from all their enemies. The glories of Immanuel in this respect are celebrated under the name of *Sher*, in several of the Psalms. In the 47th Psalm, for instance, all the people are called upon to clap their hands for joy, and to shout unto God with the voice of triumph, because Jehovah Jesus is the great king over all the earth. His happy government, under which believers receive all their blessings, was to be the constant subject of their grateful song. Singing was using words and sounds to express the praises of the king of saints, and their joy in him. It was so much the ruling and leading subject, that every hymn reminded them of Messiah the prince. Whenever they were happy in their hearts, they expressed it by singing the praises of that most glorious person, who was made flesh, humbling himself to be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and who thereby became the head of all principality and power. He ruleth the almighty Immanuel over every creature, and every thing, God-man upon his throne, till all his enemies, death itself, be destroyed, and then he will reign with the Father and the Spirit for ever and ever; for his reign is everlasting; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

This was the delightful theme in the book of Psalms. The Old Testament saints were never weary of celebrating Messiah their prince, the Lord and Saviour of his people, made an offering for their sins, dead, risen, and ascended to his throne. This is still the sweetest subject in the church of God. Happy are they, who have the Lord Christ ruling over their outward estate. Thrice happy they who have him ruling in their souls. Oh what happiness is it to have set up within them the kingdom of God! which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. None have greater reason to rejoice with joy and singing, than they who have Christ dwelling in their hearts by faith. It was one principal design of those sacred hymns to keep up this holy joy, that if any were merry they might sing Psalms and be glad in the Lord. Sensible of his tender care and royal protection, with what joyful lips will they extol their king! They would have all within them to bless his holy name, and would be praising him with Psalms and Hymns, and spiritual Songs, rejoicing all the way to Sion, and making heavenly melody in their hearts unto the Lord.

These three names take in the subject of the whole book—the Hymns contain the praises of Immanuel, our sun of righteousness—the Psalms treat of his taking our nature, and in it being cut off for his people, that through his death they might live—the Songs celebrate the glories of his kingdom, both in earth and heaven, in time and eternity. Besides these names of the book of Psalms, there are several other things written in

scripture concerning them, which confirm the account here given of their reference to the ever-blessed Messiah, king of saints and which will be farther illustrated under the consideration of:

### CHAPTER III.

#### *Some Passages of the Old Testament, concerning the Book of Psalms.*

THESE passages are either such as command the singing of Psalms, or such as lay down rules for singing them properly; of the first sort we find frequent mention. "Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people: sing unto him, sing Psalms unto him: oh sing unto the Lord a new song, sing unto the Lord, all the earth: sing unto the Lord, bless his name, show forth his salvation from day to day. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth, make a loud noise, and rejoice, and give praise: sing unto the Lord with the harp, and the voice of a Psalm. Oh clap your hands, all ye people, shout unto God with the voice of triumph: for the Lord most high is to be feared. He is the great king over all the earth: sing forth the honour of name, make his praise glorious: sing Psalms unto God, sing Psalms; sing Psalms, for it is good to sing Psalms to our God, for it is pleasant, and praise is comely: sing ye praises with the understanding: sing ye praises with the whole heart: let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Amen. Hallelujah."

In obedience to those commands, believers exhort one another to this delightful exercise: "Oh come let us sing unto the Lord, let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation [*Heb.* our Jesus]. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with Psalms." And what was thus expressed in the congregation, every believer in private applies to himself and practises. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name; while I live will I praise the Lord, I will sing praises unto my God while I have my being: I will extol thee my God, O King, and I will bless thy name for ever and ever."

We have abundant authorities in the lives of believers to prove that singing of Psalms was very early in the church. Moses composed a Psalm, which he and the whole congregation sang to the glory of their almighty Deliverer from Egyptian bondage. On the victory obtained over Sisera, the captain of Jabin's host, Deborah and Barak sang a hymn of thanksgiving, recorded in the book of the Wars of the Lord. David was the sweet singer of Israel, raised up of God to indite the praises of Immanuel; the book of Psalms, which he spake by the Holy Ghost, has been in use in the church ever since his time. They made part of every day's service in the temple. They were sung by Christ, and by his apostles. Paul and Silas in prison, with their feet in the stocks, and at midnight, had liberty in their hearts to sing a Psalm unto the Lord. We know for certain, from sacred history, confirmed by profane authors, that when the whole church was come together into one place it was part of the public service to sing Psalms; for which there were rules laid down both in the Old Testament and in the New.

The principal rule was about the end proposed in singing. Why did God enjoin it in his service? And with what view did he require it to be performed by his people? He has herein clearly revealed his will. He intended to teach them to acknowledge his infinite love in Jesus, through whom all their blessings flow, and to praise him, and to thank him with joyful hearts and lips. Singing was the outward expression of their inward joy, and therefore it was accompanied with instruments of all kinds, to proclaim in the grandest manner their joy in the Lord. While the daily sacrifice was burning on the altar, they celebrated with believing hearts the atonement of the lamb of God, and expressed their triumphing in it with all the powers of vocal and instrumental music. Thus they were commanded, *Num. 10:10*, "In the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginning of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings, that they may be to you for a memorial before the Lord your God: I am the Lord your God." This commandment Hezekiah observed. After he had cleansed the temple from the pollutions of his profane predecessor, "he set the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet: for so was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets: and the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets: and Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar, and when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel: and all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded, and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished." *2 Chr. 29:25 &c.*

Their music was not merely to please; it was expressive. For it was a memorial. It was to call to mind the sacrifice of Immanuel, and the joy flowing from it, the greatest joy that possibly can be; for all the sacrifices

pointed to him, and were instituted to keep up faith and hope in him. He was the Lamb who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, who was slain in type from the foundation of the world, and who in the fulness of time appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. The apostle has proved at large in the epistle to the Hebrews, that all the sacrifices under the law were types and figures of the sacrifice of Christ, and that the benefits ascribed to them were to signify the graces which flow to his redeemed from his sacrifice for through this alone justice was satisfied, wrath appeased, atonement made, the conscience purged from guilt, the sinner freely pardoned, fully justified, yea sanctified and perfected for ever; so that by his one offering, he saves believers from all sins and all miseries and gives them enjoyment now of all blessings, and will secure to them eternal enjoyment. Here is the fountain of all joy. From hence flows peace with God, and love to God, with every blessing of his love. All comes through the bleeding Lamb, and is the fruit of his cross and passion. This is the glorious subject treated of in the Psalms, and the singing and the music of the Old Testament were entirely in praise of this. While the burnt offering was consuming on the fire of the altar, all that sound could possibly do with voices and instruments was exerted to rouse the attention, and to inflame the affections. The full concert was to excite the highest sentiments of thankfulness in the view of that one offering, which was to bear the fire of the Father's wrath and thereby was to become an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God. No blessing is beyond this. No joy is to be compared with the joy of this. If any one had been present who did not know the occasion of this wonderful rejoicing, and had asked good Hezekiah what they meant by this music, which made the very earth ring again, he would have graciously informed the inquirer—

We are now triumphing in steadfast faith of the fulfilling of the promise, that God will be incarnate, and will come to take away sin by his sacrifice, therefore we enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise. We rejoice in our hearts in the future offering of the Lamb of God. Although we have divine words, in which to express our joy, yet our present sense of it is only according to our faith. When this is lively, our joy is unspeakable and full of glory; for it brings a foretaste of that fulness of joy, which we shall have, when we shall receive the end of our faith, even the eternal salvation of our souls. Then all the blessings, all the glories of heaven will come to us through the redemption that is in the blood of the Lamb. Hence, while the burnt-offering is consuming on the altar, we make the most joyful noise we possibly can, singing and triumphing in the offering of Immanuel; for we believe it will be a sweet smelling savour unto God, and through it we shall enter within the veil, even into heaven itself. There we shall take up the same most blessed subject, and celebrate the Lamb that was slain with never-ceasing praise.

The answer, which I suppose Hezekiah would have given, is perfectly agreeable to David's own account of this matter. He relates very clearly for what end the Psalms were revealed, and were sung in the temple service. We find it thus described, *1 Chr. 16*, "David appointed the Levites to minister before the ark and to record, and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel," *v. 4*, and again, *v. 7*, "Then on that day David delivered first this Psalm to thank the Lord into the hand of Asaph and his brethren: Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people: sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk you of all his wondrous works: glory ye in his holy name, let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord."

We have in this passage a very clear description of the design of the book of Psalms. It was first to record; the word signifies to cause to be remembered. The Psalms were a standing memorial to bring into mind the wonderful love of the ever-blessed Trinity in saving sinners through Jesus Christ, and to keep it fresh and lively upon the hearts of believers. We are apt to forget this our greatest good, and therefore God has graciously recorded it in his word. Therein he has promised to sanctify the memory to retain it, and in the use of the Psalms he bestows this blessing. When they are read and mixed with faith, then they are meditated on with delight, sung with melody, and help to keep the heart warm in its attachment to the beloved Jesus. When they are thus treasured up in the mind, and brought into constant use, believers learn, in singing them, to rejoice in the infinitely perfect sacrifice of Immanuel, and to triumph in his divine righteousness. The Psalms are the means appointed of God to answer those ends, and they do by his grace. They stir up the pure minds of his people by way of remembrance. They afford them proper matter, and choice words, and when sung with significant sounds, they excite affections to Jesus, as holy and as happy as they can be on this side of heaven.

The use of the Psalms was also to thank: "O give thanks unto the Lord: for his mercy endureth for ever," seems to have been the chorus of all the ancient hymns. The word which we translate to thank, signifies to give the hand to God, as an acknowledgment that all power was his. The hand is power. Our power extends as far as our hand reaches. The hand of God is everywhere, and his power is infinite. The custom of paying homage in ancient times explains this usage of the word, *1 Chr. 29:23,24*, "Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king, instead of David his father, and prospered, and all Israel obeyed him. And all the princes, and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise of king David submitted themselves unto Solomon the king— [*Heb. gave the hand under Solomon the king.*]" This was an expressive ceremony: they kneeled down and put their hands under his; thereby confessing that their power was subject to his; and in this manner they

paid him homage. There is a curious letter extant of king Hezekiah, which further explains both the expression and the custom. He says in it to the people, *2 Chr. 30:8*, "Be ye not stiff-necked as your fathers were, but yield yourselves,—[*Heb. give the hand unto the Lord,*] fall down before him, and ascribe all your power to the Lord; acknowledge him to have all power in heaven and earth. Thus give the honour due unto his name. Confess that all your good comes from him, and that he keeps you from all evil. Every blessing which you receive in earth, or hope for in heaven, acknowledge to be from the good pleasure of his own will, and to the praise of the glory of his free grace. Most of the Psalms were written, and should be sung, with this spirit. What David felt in his own heart at the free-will offerings of the people towards the building of the temple, the same he would excite in others, when they read or sing the Psalms. *1 Chr. 29:10,&c.*, "Wherefore David blessed the Lord before all the congregation, and David said, Blessed be thou Lord God of Israel, our Father, for ever and ever: thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine: thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all: both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all, and in thy hand is power and might, and in thy hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all: now, therefore, our God we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name." How delightfully does he here describe one great end of singing Psalms. It was to ascribe to the Lord all the glory of his word, and works, and ways—with voices and instruments, but chiefly with the music of the heart, to praise him for his goodness, and to bless him, because his mercy endureth for ever.

There is another word used, *1 Chr. 16:4*. The Psalms were to record, and to thank, and to praise (*Heb. Hallel*) the Lord God of Israel. But this has been treated of in the beginning of the second chapter. It is the running title of the Psalms, and signifies the action of light in the material world, and from thence is applied to the action of the Sun of righteousness in the spiritual world. Singing psalms was not only to remind us of him, but also to lead us to ascribe to him all the blessings of nature and grace, of earth and heaven. All are from him—the gifts of his free unmerited love, and call for the tribute of constant thankfulness. He created the sun, and ordained it to dispense every earthly blessing, that it might be a lively picture of the true light, who communicates spiritual life, with all its comforts. While the believer looks upon the most glorious Immanuel in this view, and has a warm sense of his obligations to him, how sweet is the exercise of faith! He finds the courts of the Lord to have some of the blessedness of the palace itself. Such they were to him who said, "Blessed are they that dwell in thy courts, they will be still praising thee. Selah." They will be still acknowledging their debt in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs: which is the very employment of the saints round the throne and which is the divine ordinance to express our communion with them, and to bring us a foretaste of their happiness.

From this passage in Chronicles we see the use of the Psalms in the Old Testament and for what end they were then sung in the church. It was to remind believers of the wonderful person and of the divine works of the incarnate Jehovah, that they might admire his matchless beauty, and adore him for his most precious love. With happy and thankful hearts they used daily to sing of him in the temple service. The concert will never be excelled upon this earth, and the effect which accompanied it, will only be equalled in heaven. The subject—the number of voices and instruments—the excellence of the music and of the performance—and the divine approbation which crowned the whole, by a miracle confirming the faith and strengthening the hopes of the congregation; these are most nobly described in *2 Chr. 5:11,12,&c.* Solomon had finished the temple, and had brought the ark of the covenant into the holy of holies: "And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place: for all the priests that were present were sanctified, and did not then wait by course: also the Levites, who were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen having cymbals, and psalteries, and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets: it came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord. And when they lift up their voice with the trumpets, and cymbals, and instruments of music, and praised the Lord saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever; that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord: so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God." All Israel met upon this occasion, a very great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath, unto the river of Egypt. They came to the dedication of the temple, knowing that it was a type of the body of Christ and prefigured his coming from heaven to dwell with men on the earth. The filling the temple with glory was to teach them that a person in Jehovah was to tabernacle in the manhood of Christ. In him the fulness of the Godhead was to dwell bodily, and out of his fulness they should receive grace for grace. While they were looking forward with joyful hope, and singing the praises of this most blessed event, the Lord gave them the sensible proof, that he would come and inhabit the temple of his body, and would also come and dwell in their hearts by faith. Once in the end of the world God was manifest in the flesh but in every age he has visited his people with his presence, and blessed them with his love, while they have been with thankful hearts ascribing to him all the glory of their salvation. When he has thus disposed them to give him the honour due unto his name, then he has brought them into a proper temper to receive the greatest communications of his grace. For the most high and holy One that inhabiteth eternity vouchsafes to dwell in the humble and contrite heart. The King of kings admits the meek and lowly to the nearest approach,

yea, to the most intimate familiarity with him. The highest resides with the lowest. With them the almighty Sovereign keeps his court, according to his promise—"I will dwell with you, and will walk among you, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people." When he smiles upon them with his reconciled countenance, and excites in them holy love and humble adoration: oh what an happiness is it to behold the King in his beauty, even here by faith. The soul thus enamoured with him will find it a most delightful employment to sing his praises, and cannot help breaking out into psalms and hymns of thankfulness. These are the appointed means of testifying its sacred joy. In them the saints above have their heavenly exercise, and the saints below have often in the use of the same means a foretaste of the glory to be revealed.

When Zerubbabel and his brethren began to rebuild the temple after the captivity, the work was entered upon with singing of psalms. "And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel; and they sang together by course, in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord: because he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever towards Israel." *Ezra 3:10,11*. The words to praise, and to give thanks, are the same as in the forecited place in Chronicles, and applied to the same person, even to the Desire of all nations, who was to come and fill the second temple with his glory—"The glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former, saith the Lord of hosts:" *Hag. 2:7*, which was really accomplished, when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Then the Lord came to his temple, and his disciples saw his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Of him also sang Nehemiah, as mentioned in chap. 12. He repaired the wall of Jerusalem, and ended it with praising and giving thanks to the Lord God of Israel, singing psalms unto him with voices and instruments of music, according to the commandment of David, the man of God. From these instances it is plain that the general subject of the Psalms was to ascribe to the incarnate Jehovah all the honour of saving sinners. The sweet psalmist of Israel frequently calls upon the church to sing psalms to the Saviour's praise, particularly in Psalm 92, which was constantly sung on the sabbath, the day of praise; in Psalms 95, 96, 98, &c. And he does this very remarkably in the hundredth Psalm, wherein he calls upon believers to join in this delightful work, and assigns several reasons for their encouragement to do it with the warmest gratitude of their hearts. The title is,

A Psalm of Confession *viz.* to God for his goodness, and for the wonders which he hath done for the children of men.

1. O all the earth make the air ring with the praises of Jehovah.
2. Serve ye Jehovah with heartfelt joy: come ye into his presence with the highest praises you can give.
3. Be ye certain, that Jehovah is the very *Alehim*, he hath made us, and not we ourselves, we are his people, and the flock under his pastoral care:
4. Enter ye into his gates with confession, into his courts with ascribing to him the praise of giving you every thing useful, pay ye homage to him, bless ye his name:
5. For Jehovah is good, his mercy is for ever, and his faithfulness is from generation to generation.

When believers in their church service used to sing this psalm, they acknowledged in it the goodness of God to them, and had in their hearts sentiments of his loving kindness, such as these:—

1. O, all ye inhabitants of the world, who have found redemption through faith in the blood of the Lamb, join together to make his praise to be heard: sing unto Jehovah a new song, sing praises unto him lustily with a good courage:
2. Serve ye Jehovah with a free spirit, singing and making melody in your hearts unto him: come ye into his presence having now access with confidence, and let the high praises of God be in your mouth, ascribing to him all the glory of your salvation:
3. Be ye certain that Jehovah is the very *Alehim*, the Three in covenant to save sinners: for he has made us, and not we ourselves, we neither made ourselves creatures, nor new creatures in Christ Jesus—he gave us our being, and our well being—we have nothing of our own but sin; and he has made us his free subjects by redeeming us from the bondage of sin, yea, we are his beloved flock, and he is our good shepherd, who will give grace and glory to his people, and to the sheep of his pasture:

4. O come ye then into his gates with thankful acknowledgment of his infinite goodness to your souls; meet him in the great congregation, and join all the redeemed, who in earth and heaven are with one heart giving blessing and honour and glory and power, to God and the Lamb.

6. For Jehovah is good, and doeth good, his mercy is to be celebrated in his church militant from age to age, and his never failing faithfulness is to be your subject of never ending praise in the church triumphant.

Oh for such holy affections as this Psalm requires. Reader, art thou acquainted with the subject, and art thou indeed a partaker of that thankfulness of which it treats? Oh beg of him then to give thee a growing sense of thine utter unworthiness of the least mercy. This is gospel poverty of spirit, and this will lead thee to pray for a more thankful acknowledgment of the goodness of God flowing from the happy experience of its blessings, and influencing the whole man to praise him for them. To this grateful temper the very reading of the Psalm will be as an ordinance, and the singing of it with the melody of the heart will be a feast.

From these authorities of the Old Testament it is plain that the subject of the Book of Psalms, and the singing them, were intended to excite in believers the warmest sentiments of gratitude. The love of God manifested in saving sinners through Jesus Christ, is herein described with the true sublime both of style and sentiment; and when any Psalm was sung, if the heart felt the subject, and made harmony there, then it became a delightful, as well as an acceptable service. But we shall see clearer evidence of this matter if we attend to:

## CHAPTER IV.

### *Some Passages in the New Testament concerning the Book of Psalms.*

THE quotations are very numerous. Christ and his apostles often refer to the Psalms, and make a direct application of them; for they all treat of him, as indeed the whole volume of revelation does. He is the spirit and life of all the Bible; but there is no part so particularly, and so frequently applied to him, as the Book of Psalms. We know the subject of the 110th from infallible authority—it is the heavenly government of king-mediator, who is David's son, and yet David calleth him his Lord; for he was God and man in one Christ. His own use of the Psalms is very remarkable: he sung them and quoted them. At his last passover he joined with his apostles in the Psalms commonly used upon that occasion. St. Matthew says, "when they had sung an hymn," which is supposed to be part of the grand hallelujah, beginning at the 113th, and ending with the 118th Psalm. Hereby our Lord not only made use of, but also applied those divine hymns to himself, he being indeed the very paschal Lamb slain in type from the foundation of the world, and now about to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And after he had by his sufferings and death made a full atonement, and was risen from the dead, he reprov'd his two disciples as they were going to Emmaus, and he said unto them, *Luke 24:26*, "O ye without understanding, how slow of heart are ye to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to have entered into his glory? And beginning at Moses, he expounded unto them from all the prophets, the things written of himself in all the scriptures." And among the rest he expounded unto them out of the Psalms, as his custom was; for when he appeared to his apostles to confirm them in the belief of his resurrection, he said unto them, "These are the words, which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me. Then opened he their understandings that they might understand the scriptures." Here he declares that the Psalms were written concerning himself. Not only here and there a passage, or an allusion, not only the quotations in the New Testament, but the whole volume throughout is concerning him. Upon whatever occasion the Psalmist composed any of them, yet it was only a case to speak upon, in order to introduce what was to be said concerning the divine person, and the divine work of the Messiah. This is the spiritual use and design of the Psalms. And every man, whose understanding the Lord has opened, as he did his disciples, can see them in this light. The veil being taken away, he beholds Christ with open face, and every Psalm shows to him some lovely feature of his most lovely Saviour. Therein he reads of the divine and human nature of Immanuel, his life and death, his resurrection and ascension, his kingdom and glory. He understands the scriptures, and with the joy of his heart receives what is therein written concerning the God of his salvation.

Agreeably to our Lord's own use of the Psalms, we find the whole church of believers with one accord using them in the same manner. The instance recorded in Acts 4 is remarkable, because the reference which they made to the Psalms indisputably proves that they are written concerning Christ. Peter and John had been imprisoned for preaching Jesus, but being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them: and when they heard that, they lift up their voice to God with one accord, and said, "Lord, thou art God, who hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: who, by the mouth of thy servant David, hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain

things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ for of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." Here the whole church under the special influence of the Holy Spirit applies the second Psalm to Christ, and declares its accomplishment in him—he being of a truth the very person of whom it treats: which is decisive evidence, and must determine the point even to a demonstration with all that believe the scriptures.

It is not to be wondered, then, that the apostles should follow the same rule in explaining the Psalms. Peter quotes them and refers them to Christ. In his first sermon recorded, *Acts 2*, he applies the 16th Psalm to the resurrection of Christ, and he brings the 110th to prove that Christ had all power in heaven and earth, and should sit at the right hand of Jehovah, until all his enemies should be made his footstool. In the fourth chapter of the Acts, he shows that Christ was the stone set at nought by the Jewish builders, who nevertheless should be made the head of the corner, as it is in the 118th Psalm. Peter had no doubt concerning the application of the Psalms to Christ, and his beloved brother Paul shows he was of the same opinion.

We have an account of his manner of preaching among the Jews: "He used to reason with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is the Christ." And among the other scriptures he did not forget the Psalms: for we, in *Acts 8*, have a whole sermon of his, an inestimable treasury of his scripture learning, in which he quotes several Psalms, and directly applies them to Christ, as he also does in his other writings. His epistle to the Hebrews abounds with references, twenty-nine at least. The third and fourth chapters are a comment on the 95th Psalm; as the seventh chapter is on the 110th, and the tenth is on the 40th. Whoever will attend to the manner in which the apostle reasons upon these passages, will readily perceive, that he does not enter upon any formal proof of the design of the book of Psalms, or of Christ's being the subject of them. He does not aim at any such thing; but takes it for granted and argues upon it as an established truth. Indeed it was at that time the belief of the whole church. There was, then, no doubt but all scripture treated of him—"to him give ALL the prophets witness,"—he was their one subject. But more especially in the Psalms he was set forth, and was to be highly exalted, with all the powers of poetry, and with the sweetest sounds of instruments and voices. These hymns were inspired to celebrate his matchless fame and renown; that whenever believers felt themselves happy in the knowledge and love of Jesus, here they might find proper matter and suitable words to raise their gratitude, as high as it can be on this side of heaven. We have also the apostle's practice and experience to recommend his use of the Psalms. He sung them with delight, as well as quoted them with propriety. His love to Jesus ran as high as love ever will upon earth. He speaks of him continually as the perfect delight of his soul, on whom he had placed all his affections and whom he found every day worthy of more love than his narrow heart could contain. Oh how precious was his Saviour, when he could say "What things are gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ: yea doubtless, and I do count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and I do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." Happy Paul! what must he have seen in Jesus, who could count it an honour to suffer shame for his name, and an infinite gain to win Christ, though with the loss of all things? Oh happy, thrice happy man, who could carry the cross of Christ, and esteem it as his crown. God forbid, says he, that I should glory in any thing, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ: for I count not my life dear to myself, so as I may but live and die fulfilling his will. And this was not a flight of fancy, or a mere rant of enthusiasm, but it was cool sober love, and arose from real experience of the preciousness of Jesus to his heart. This heavenly lover was the subject of his songs in the worst house of his painful pilgrimage. He was so truly in body, and soul, and spirit, devoted to his Jesus, that how much soever he suffered, yet he could rejoice in the Lord. Oh what a proof did he give of it!—sufficient to shame our highest professions of attachment to the dear Redeemer. When he had been beaten with many and cruel stripes, put into a dismal dungeon, and even there, with his feet in the stocks, his heart was then full of gratitude, and in tune to make delightful melody unto the Lord, yea, brake out into Psalms of praise—"At midnight, Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God," with a loud voice, for the prisoners heard them. Oh for more faith in Jesus to fill us more with this thankful and praising spirit. Lord, pour it out abundantly for thy mercies' sake upon all those who believe in thy holy name: let us make our boast of thee all the day long, and praise thy name for ever.

From these instances it is evident, that the New Testament church understood the Psalms in the same light as the Old. Believers always sung them with the same view, with hearts and voices making melody unto the Lord Christ. He himself confirmed this use of them; for he joined in this part of religious worship. The apostles quoted the Psalms, and directly applied them to the blessed Lord. Yea, when the church met together in one place, the Psalms were not only read and sung, but some abuses in singing them are corrected, which will lead me to consider,

## CHAPTER V.

### *Rules laid down in Scripture for singing them aright.*

SINGING of Psalms is a divine ordinance, and has an inward and an outward service. The inward consists in the proper frame and affection of the renewed and spiritual mind; for no man can use the Psalms as an ordinance of God, who has not received the Spirit of God; without him we can do nothing, being dead in trespasses and sins. And after he is received, he is the continual breath of spiritual life, yea, as much as the air we breathe is of natural life. Every spiritual sensation of peace, comfort, and joy in God the Father, is from the divine agency of the Lord the Spirit. Every act of religious worship is performed acceptably by his strengthening us mightily in the inner man, and giving us the will and the power. If we pray aright, it is in the Holy Ghost. If we hear aright, it is by his blessing on the word preached. If we sing aright, it is by the same Spirit, and therefore we are not only commanded to seek his assistance in all we do, but also a growing and increasing measure of his graces and gifts. Thus the apostle directs the Ephesians in their singing of Psalms, "Be ye filled with the Spirit speaking to yourselves in Psalms," &c. This is not meant of receiving him at first; for it is spoken to believers, who had the Spirit, but it relates to their thirsting after more, how much soever they had attained, still more of the Spirit's fulness, it being in him infinite, and always in us finite. We never have so much, but we may have more and when we have the most, our thirst is then the greatest. This is an holy thirst, to which there is a divine invitation—"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters of life." And a divine promise—"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink; but this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." And when this promise is fulfilled, and the Holy Spirit is received, we are still in faith to use means for the increasing of his graces and gifts; among which means the apostle recommends—"Speaking to yourselves in Psalms," &c. He supposes their singing would tend to their mutual edification: for the words are in the plural number, and denote their joining together in this holy exercise. He also commands the Colossians to instruct and to admonish one another in Psalms, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs, herein using the grace given both for its exercise, and also for its improvement. And this true manner of singing comes from the Spirit, and increases the fruits of the Spirit.

It comes from the Spirit; because none can perform it, but the new creature in Christ Jesus. It is a spiritual service, in which only the spiritual man can join. No one can make any melody acceptable to God, who has not been first a partaker of the Holy Ghost. He is the Lord and Giver of life; without whom all men are dead in trespasses and sins. He only can quicken and make the soul alive to God. It requires his almighty power, and it belongs to his covenant office. And when he, the Spirit of life, makes any one free from the law of sin and death, then he is a child of God. He is made to know it, and to believe it: for he has received the spirit of adoption, whereby he cries Abba, Father. In the sense of this love shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, he begins to rejoice in God, as his God. Trusting to what Jesus is to him, that he has satisfied for his sins, has wrought out his righteousness, and is now standing in the presence of God for him, he sees himself accepted in the Beloved, an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. Hereby his heart becomes reconciled to God, and he finds the truth of what is written—"We love him, because he first loved us." Now he has David's affection, and he can join heartily in singing with him—"Bless the Lord O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases: who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies."

Thus the right singing the praises of God comes from the Spirit, and it also increases the fruits of the Spirit. It is one of the appointed means of improving them. True grace is always operative, and grows by the fruit which it bears. If the believer be rejoicing, singing will add to his joy, as it is written, "Is any in a happy frame? Let him sing Psalms;" and that will make him happier. It is the divine promise and cannot fail; he shall increase his joy in the Lord. Is any afflicted? Psalms will refresh and comfort him; Paul and Silas sore whipped, and put into the stocks, sung a psalm at midnight. The fulness of the Spirit in the sweet singer of Israel, went out much this way. He sang most, and praised best, of all the saints of God. He sang in all frames, and upon all occasions; let us follow his example, and be speaking much and often to one another, in Psalms, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs, seeking thereby to be filled with a growing measure of the Holy Spirit.

If thou enquirest, How shall I obtain this inestimable blessing? The command is—"ask, and it shall be given you, seek, and ye shall find"—whoever is made sensible he stands in need of the assistance of the Holy Spirit is only required to ask, and the promise is—"Every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth: if a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to

them that ask him?" How gracious are these words! How encouraging are they to every one who has any concern about his salvation, to desire the Holy Spirit may he given to him, to enable him to trust in Jesus, and to find the Father's love in him; and they leave every man without excuse, who lives and dies without those blessings, which God has promised to give to every one that asketh.

Whoever is a partaker of the Spirit, has a new nature in Christ Jesus, and has a new understanding given him, whereby he is enabled to discern and to judge of spiritual things: for thus runs the promise—"He shall lead you into all truth." And the apostle prays for the fulfilling of it to the Ephesians—"May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened." The Holy Spirit acts upon men as rational creatures. He does not treat them as if they were stones or brutes; but he makes the truths of the gospel clear to the mind, and desirable to the will. He opens the eyes of the understanding to see the object, and then presents it in its glorious beauty and attracting loveliness. The renewed mind beholds, admires and loves it; and then, animated with this love, can sing its praises. Holy men of God in the Old Testament sung with knowledge. Ignorance was not the mother of their Psalmody. They were well acquainted with what they sung. The royal prophet says, he employed his understanding in this devout exercise, as well as his harp and his voice. Hear him, how earnestly he calls upon others to extol his beloved Jesus—"Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises: for God is the king of all the earth sing ye praises with understanding." He would have them to mind what they were about, and to understand what they sung; lest they should utter lies unto the Lord, or offer to him a sacrifice without a heart. Consider whom you have to deal with—how great and good a God—observe how you praise him; engage all your mental powers in this delightful work, that it may be holy, acceptable to God, and a reasonable service.

The apostle agrees in sentiment with the Psalmist: for thus he speaks to the Corinthians: "If I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful: what is it, then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." Singing is unfruitful, unless the understanding go with it. Unless the mind be profited and God be honoured, it is only empty sound. But when we sing by the Spirit, then he will teach us to sing with the understanding also. He will open the subject to us, will give a fixed attention to it, will bring the mind into tune, and will keep us looking at the sense more than at the sound.

Is it so with thee, O my soul? Enquire carefully. Art thou led by the Spirit in thy singing? Does he enlighten thy mind and guide thee into the knowledge of the subject in which thou art engaged? Take heed, and be often examining thyself—how thy mind is affected—lest thou shouldst present unto the Lord the song of fools.

But chiefly keep thy heart diligently; because out of it are the issues of life. The man is what his heart is. If this be dead to God, nothing in him is alive. If this be right with God, all will be right. If he has a clean heart and a right spirit renewed within him, the Holy Ghost has made him a new creature in Christ Jesus, and has won the will and the affections over to God. This is his principal office in the conversion of sinners. He therefore discovers truth to the understanding, in order that it may become desirable, and that the heart may be properly influenced by it. The heart is the commanding faculty. When this has once tasted the sweetness of the Father's love in Jesus, it will engage the whole man to seek for more. Love is very active, and will do or suffer much to obtain and to preserve the beloved object. Set this spring agoing, it will move all the wheels. The hands will work for God. The feet will run the way of his commandments. Love will make heavy burdens not grievous to be borne; love will carry them a long time, and faint not. Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love which he had unto her. The labour of love is always delightful. When we know God to be our Father in Jesus, and have his love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, then his service becomes perfect freedom; then duty is ennobled into privilege; then obedience becomes willing and filial; the beloved child finds free access to the Father's throne, and receives blessed communications of his grace; for which his thankful heart offers the sacrifice of praise, and it comes up with a sweet savour acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. This is the melody of the heart. While it feels its infinite debt to free grace, is deeply convinced of its utter unworthiness, and is kept humble by the abiding sense of its imperfections, and of its indwelling corruptions, it is in a right frame to exalt the exceeding riches of divine mercy. Then it is disposed to give God all his glory. This he requires as his due, and it becometh well the righteous to say it. When the heart is made willing to ascribe every good to his holy name, then it is right with God. All within is now in tune to join every golden harp, and every joyful tongue in heaven, which are ascribing blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever.

This is the chief requisite in singing Psalms. The heart makes the best music. The finest compositions, ever so well executed with instruments and voices, are not a divine concert, unless the heart accompany them. David knew this well, and therefore he set his affections to the highest pitch of praise, and he brought all of them to join. His whole heart entered into the performance, and rendered the concert full—"I will praise thee,

O Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify thy name for evermore: for great is thy mercy towards me." Thy special covenant mercy is such towards me, that my very thoughts cannot rise up to its greatness; how then can I utter forth all its praise? I cannot; no, not even half of it. But though the debt be so great, that I cannot count it up; yet I will the more extol thee for it from day to day. I would engage my affections, and give them all up to this heavenly employment. I would have my whole soul in it. And yet the debt remains, rather increases. Oh for a more enlarged heart! My praises continued are only acknowledgments, and I want them continued with growing humility—more in earth and more in heaven. There I shall praise better, when my heart will have nothing in it, but humble gratitude. Yet here I will not give over; but will carry on my joyful song, till I can sing in a higher strain. "Praise the Lord O my soul, and all within me bless his holy name: O give thanks unto him for he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever. Hallelujah."

The apostle Paul had his portion in the same mercy, and had the same grateful sense of it. He sang the Psalms of David with the spirit of David. What he practised himself he has recommended to others. He has given us some rules about singing in the congregation, and he chiefly confines them to the heart accompanying the voice. Thus he directs the Ephesians—"Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess; but be ye filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts unto the Lord, giving thanks alway for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." He would not have them meet together, as they formerly had done, to feast without fear, and to drink unto drunkenness, inciting one another to greater riot and excess by wanton and profane songs; which was the custom at most of the heathen banquets. They used to try to fill one another with wickedness. But ye have not so learned Christ. Seek ye to be filled with his Spirit, and use the means appointed for that purpose; among which, singing of Psalms, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs, is one of the chief. These several names are expressive of the different subjects treated of in the sacred poetry; hymns are in praise of Immanuel, spiritual songs are in praise of his spiritual kingdom, according to the sense of the words in the Hebrew, and according to the translation of them in the Septuagint, as was before-shown. The manner of singing them, it is here said, was by joining together with their voices, but especially with their hearts. From thence comes the best melody. Harmony in sound is pleasant in our ears, but harmony in affection is the music which enters into the ears of the Lord of hosts. "My son, give me thy heart," he will have no service without it. Prayer, obedience, praise, every offering must come from the heart. He looks at this, and this in all, and above all. This he accepts, and testifies his delight in; for it is the same sacrifice of praise, which will for ever delight him. The church triumphant has begun the song, which will be perfectly and for ever pleasing to the Lord; and when we meet below with one faith to glorify our one Lord, then we enjoy the communion of saints. We have one heart with them—join in the same subject of praise to their Lord and our Lord—our harmony is theirs—our happiness is theirs—it is one and the same communion with the Father and the Son by the Spirit. And though we cannot raise our song to so high a pitch, or continue it without ceasing, as the saints above do; yet we entirely agree with them, and are trying to make better music in our hearts every day, until we see their Jesus and our Jesus face to face. He loves us, as well as them: for he is our Immanuel: and our souls rejoice in him together with them. We love him, we serve him, we bless him, as humbly, and as thankfully, as we can; yea in all things we would be giving of thanks to his holy name. Oh for more love, more thankfulness, more devotedness to our precious Lord Jesus Christ. This is our daily prayer, and our constant pursuit. Blessed and eternal Spirit purify our hearts by faith, and increase in them a sense of his wondrous love to us, that we may be growing in love to him, until he vouchsafe to admit us into his presence, and give us to thank him with never-ceasing songs of praise.

In another place the apostle treats of the same subject, only varies the expression a little. He recommends singing of Psalms to the Colossians, as an ordinance of God for increasing the graces of his people—"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord: and whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." The Colossians had put on the new man, and the apostle exhorts them to put on the ornaments and endowments peculiar to their new nature, and he mentions several of them, in which he would have them to be growing daily; and he proposes to them the word of God, as the best means for this purpose. He would have it treasured up in their hearts, and inwardly digested—"dwelling richly in them in all wisdom," for knowledge and practice. He includes both; because this wisdom was for edification—they were to teach and to admonish one another. What each had learnt out of the scriptures was to be of public benefit to the church. And the way of doing this is particularly mentioned—they were to sing together with grace in their hearts. All is discord within, until we are taught by grace, free effectual grace. But when we believe the doctrines of grace, then harmony comes in and we learn to ascribe every good to the mere mercy of God. We receive his blessings, and he receives all the praise of them. Then grace is in the heart; it is there not only to reconcile the sinner to the way of salvation by faith alone, but also to make him in love with it, and to keep him willing to praise God for it with his lips and life. Oh how good a thing is it, that the heart be thus established with grace; for then the affections will be fixed upon the right object, and the whole soul will be in harmony with the truth as it is in Jesus. Free grace doctrines felt in their power in the heart make heavenly melody. Every faculty is in tune, and inclined to bear its part in blessing the name of the Lord. The understanding sees it right, the will

chooses, the heart loves to give him all the praise, and the mouth joins to glorify him with joyful lips, singing unto the Lord—the God-man—Immanuel is the subject of this happy song. He is the God of all grace. It is a joyful and pleasant thing to be thanking him for it, yea, it is a foretaste of the saints' fulness of joy. The truly humble believer seeing the exceeding riches of grace, gladly joins his elder brethren round the throne in praising the Lord Jesus Christ. And when the temple of God shall be complete, and the last believer joined to the spiritual building, then the top stone shall be brought forth with shouting—grace—grace unto it—glory be to free grace for ever and ever.

To the same purpose the apostle James, *James 5:13*, teaching believers how to behave in every state, directs them, "Is any, among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing Psalms." Affliction should send him to prayer for grace to bear it and to improve it: joy to singing of Psalms, to express thankfulness to God. Is any merry? that is a proper season, though not the only season. Prayer is necessary at all times, though it be more needful in affliction; and so singing; it is not only needful when we are rejoicing, in order that our joy may centre in the Lord, but sometimes singing will beget spiritual joy, and will awaken it in the afflicted heart. Paul and Silas were in great outward distress, yet they sang a psalm in prison. The apostles sang an hymn after the sacrament, although they knew their Lord was going to suffer, and they were greatly troubled. In that sorrowful hour they sang. Singing is always seasonable, but especially when the heart is happy. "Is any among you merry; Let him sing Psalms." Is he in a good frame of mind, rejoicing in the bounty of God, either for temporal or spiritual mercies? Let him sing Psalms to the praise and glory of his benefactor: this is a proper expression of gratitude for favours received, and will be the means of securing them; for since his happiness comes from a good God, and arises from communion with God in Christ, it is fit and meet that he should ascribe it to the right object, and in a way of God's own appointing. A divine Hymn upon the subject of praise (of which there are many) sung with heartfelt thankfulness, is a grateful service. The Lord requires such an acknowledgment, and it becometh well the just to be thankful—yea he has vouchsafed to reveal the very words, in which he requires it to be paid him; and when all within us blesses his holy name, rejoicing in the Lord, he would have the outward man to join, and to declare with the melody of his lips, how happy he is in his heart. Thus in singing the praises of our God we shall find fresh reason to praise him. He will certainly meet us in his own means, and bless us in his own ways. We shall not wait upon him in vain. The means of his appointing cannot fail of answering the end. He has promised to put honour upon his own appointments, and his word cannot be broken. The joyful Christian is commanded to sing the praises of his God, and his heart shall be thereby kept in holy joy, yea, it shall be increased. His joy shall abound: and when believers sing, as they are commanded, with one another, it shall tend to their mutual edification. It shall stir them up to greater thankfulness, and excite warmer affection to the God of their salvation. Singing Psalms is a church ordinance, and as such it is blessed. The Lord will not forsake the assembly of his saints. When they are met together to praise him, he will be in the midst of them, and will manifest his acceptance, both of their persons and services. This will make their attendance upon him delightful when he lifts up the light of his countenance upon them, how can they help singing what they feel? Now, they experience he has bought them with his blood, and saved them from hell, has wrought out their righteousness, and will give them his heaven, it becometh them well to praise him, and to rejoice in his holy name. He has made them blessed at present, and they shall be blessed for evermore. Their blessedness comes from a never-failing spring. They are the one true church, of which it is said—"Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody." Singing is their heaven in the church triumphant. They have the fulness of joy from God and the Lamb, and they acknowledge it with humble adoration, and a grateful song of never-ending praise. The innumerable company of the redeemed will find their heaven of heavens in enjoying communion with the holy Trinity, and in singing the glories of that mercy which is from everlasting to everlasting.

In this passage the apostle James supposes that joy and singing agree well together. So they do. They depend on one another as the cause and the effect. The melody of the heart breaks out, and expresses itself with the melody of the mouth. A heart made sensible of God's love in Christ has the greatest reason to rejoice, and will be ready to show it in every way of God's appointment, particularly in singing the praises of his wondrous love. Does the prophet, happy in his soul, declare, "My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips"—true Christians can gladly join him. They have returned to God in faith, and have found redemption through the blood of the Lamb. They know in whom they have believed and are satisfied of the Father's love to them in his dear Son. Now they can delight in God. It is their privilege to rejoice in him as their God; yea it is their bounden duty; he calls upon them to express their sense of his goodness in songs of praise. This joy in God is one of the chief ingredients in psalm singing. The heart cannot make pleasant melody, unless joy be there; for the Lord God has an unalienable right to the service of the whole man, but we never acknowledge it, until we become his children through faith in Christ Jesus; in whom we have free access unto the Father. Then, persuaded of his precious love to us, we love him again, and in thankfulness give up ourselves, with all we have and are, to his service and glory. From hence arises our joy in God, and every expression of it; which were required of all men by the holy law, but are only fulfilled by those who have the faith of the gospel. An unpardoned sinner cannot possibly rejoice in God, because this holy joy is the fruit of the Spirit, and is the consequence of believing. Thus David—"The Lord is my strength and my shield, my heart trusted in him, and I am helped, therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song will I praise

him." What the prophet had experienced himself, the same he wishes for others—"Let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice, let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee." And when a company of these happy people meet together it is the delight of their hearts to join in praises to their God and Saviour. "O come let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a cheerful noise to the Rock of our salvation: let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with Psalms." With these words we always begin the reading of the scriptures in our church service. And what could be more suitable? How proper is it in a congregation of believers to call upon one another to join in the praises of the common Saviour, that we may strengthen our mutual joy in him. All true joy comes from him, and every acknowledgement of it, inward and outward, is therefore required, in order to preserve and to increase our rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ. He deserves all our joy—the loveliness of Immanuel—his love to us—the blessings of his love—how many—how great—how lasting! these should encourage us to be glad in him now with great joy. But the well-grounded prospect, which hope has, of finding in him infinite and everlasting blessings should lead us to rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory. This prospect has brightened the darkest day; it has enabled sufferers greatly to rejoice, when in heaviness through manifold temptations, it has supported them under every fiery trial. Nothing could extinguish the joy. It has lived, and triumphed in the martyr's breast, even in the agonies of the most painful death. Faith reads, and with hope looks out for (and it is a hope that will never be ashamed) the accomplishment of this faithful promise—"The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads, they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Dost thou find, O my soul, any of this holy joy? Canst thou sing Psalms with the understanding, with the heart, and with gladness in thy heart, rejoicing in the Lord? Canst thou give thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ? This is the privilege of every true believer. Being saved from sin and hell, made an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ, he has an interest in all things; for they are all working together, under God, for his present and eternal good. While he lives by faith, he knows it, and has the comfort of it. His heart is kept in tune, and whatever befalls him, he has reason to rejoice in the Lord his God.

Thus the Lord would have his people to rejoice in him always. It is not only true in theory, that they may, but it is also true in practice, if the outward walk be in concord with the doctrine of the Psalms. This is another essential part of psalm singing. The believer should live as he sings. His life should be in harmony with his principles. If he sees the truth as it is in Jesus, and loves it, and rejoices in it, the effect of all this will certainly be outward and visible. The inward melody will be expressed in his tempers and behaviour. There will be a consistency throughout. As he lives, so he will walk, by the faith of the Son of God. Practice and principle will sweetly accord. The same sound that comes from his lips, comes also from his heart, and his whole life will be in unison. His actions sing, his tempers are in harmony, his behaviour makes up the chorus abroad and at home, the music of his heart and life gives one certain note—Jesus is mine all—I live in him—on him—to him—I would have all within me to praise him, and all without me to show forth his praises—blessings on him for ever and ever. Amen.

If a man's life be not thus consistent with his singing, he mocks God, he deceives his neighbour, and he gives the lie to his own words. Actions are surer evidences than sounds; for they discover the settled and the last purpose of the mind. They show not only what a man talks of, but what he is determined to live by. The true character cannot be known, but from them. God only sees the heart. We know what is in it, by what comes out of it. We judge of the fountain from the stream. If the words and works be evil, so is the heart, for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries; fornications, &c. these are clear facts to judge by. If such a man was to sing with a voice like an angel, it is a voice and nothing more. His actions prove it to be mere air and empty sound; yea, they demonstrate, that his heart is in perfect discord with God. He says one thing, and does the contrary. He seems to praise God, as if he was happy in his love; but he cleaves to the world, and seeks his happiness in it. He sings—"Whom have I in heaven but thee?" yet shows his supreme joy is in the earth. How can any thing that such a man sings be an acceptable service, while his heart and life are in direct opposition to the holy will of God? A Jew can sing, a Turk can join in concert with him, an infidel may play well upon an instrument; a company of Jews, Turks, and infidels, may perform the finest piece of music, and with the most harmonious sounds. They may go through the oratorio of the Messiah without one discord. But here is no melody to the Lord. They have no design to show forth the praises of Immanuel; and what is not done in faith, and to his glory, is sin. Their music is as hateful to him as any of their other vices; for self is the burden of their song. They sing to please themselves, and to please God is not in all their thoughts. Oh consider this ye that come to church, and join in singing the Psalms! Is it with you an ordinance of God? Do you look upon it as such, and find it such? Does your understanding go with the Psalm, and your heart enter into it? Is it the joy of your heart? Do you sing rejoicing in God? And do you find him your one supreme blessedness all the day long? So that your life is a continued song of praise, and every action of it being subject to his holy will, preserves the harmony, and keeps up the heavenly joy. Is it thus, indeed; who is like unto you, O people saved by the Lord? May nothing cause discord between you any

more, but may increasing faith witness with growing comfort that you are one with God, and he is one with you. Look to Jesus. Let your eyes be fixed upon him, expecting all out of his fulness. Keep close to him. Thus you shall go on your way rejoicing; and soon you shall see him face to face, and your joy shall be full.

If all these things be put together, then we learn that singing Psalms is an ordinance of God, and one of the means of grace, instituted for the exercise and for the improvement of grace. It is commanded with a promise, and the promise is made good to this very day, as thousands of living witnesses can testify. When they have met together, understanding the subject of the Psalm, and singing it with melody in their hearts, then the Lord has accepted their praises, and increased their joy in him. They have found their affections drawn nearer to him, and he has warmed them with a sweet sense of his love. And this has not been a transient visit. It did not cease when they had done singing, but the harmony was preserved in a well ordered walk, directed by the faith of the Son of God. They lived their songs. Peace and love dwelt in their hearts, and their joy abounded in the Lord.

But where is this sort of singing, in what place, or among what people? Who are they that find those heavenly affections exercised in it, and those happy effects from it? It is much to be lamented, that all singing of Psalms at present is not upon the right plan, and does not answer the end of its institution. I speak not of the contempt with which it is treated by the age, or of the neglect of it by many professors, but of the prevailing abuses of it among them who would be thought altogether Christians.

## CHAPTER VI.

*These Abuses I should particularly mention, and humbly propose a Remedy for each of them.*

SOME of these may seem not worthy of notice, they are such small matter, but I think there is nothing little in divine worship. The majesty of God ennobles and exalts every part of it. He has commanded us to sing Psalms and whatever he has been pleased to command, has his authority to enforce it and whatever he has engaged to bless, has his promise to make it the means of blessing. In keeping of it there is at present great reward. His presence will be in it, when it is rightly perfumed, and he will render it effectual. He will hear, he will accept, he will witness his acceptance of the praises of his people; therefore everything relating to them should be done decently and in order. We should always sing with a reverence becoming the greatness and goodness of our God, in such a manner as may best express our happiness in his love, and as may tend most to mutual edification.

If these things be considered, it will not be thought an indifferent matter, whether the Psalms be sung at all, or how they be sung—whether with, or without any heart devotion,—whether with, or without any melody of the voice—whether every believer in the congregation should sing or no—whether singing should be a trial of skill, who can bawl loudest—whether the posture should not be expressive as well as the voice—whether suitable portions of the Psalms should be chosen, or the person who gives them out should be left to choose them, often without any judgment—whether grace should be exercised in singing, or not—whether we should sing in order to increase grace, or not—whether we should sing for amusement, or for the glory of God. It is not a trifling matter how you determine those points; they enter deep into an important part of religious worship, yea, into a very high act of it, one in which we pay the noblest service we can upon earth and indeed the nearest we can come to the service of saints and angels. How then can it be an indifferent thing, whether a believer sings Psalms or not, or whether or no he sings them with melody in his heart unto the Lord? Certainly if he would please God in singing, he should attend to the scripture rules before laid down for directing his conduct, which compared with the analogy of faith will regulate everything relating to the divine ordinance of Psalm singing.

One great abuse is the general ignorance of the subject of the book of Psalms. No portion of God's word is less known; many in our congregation very seldom understand what they are singing. They have not Christ in their eye, nor his glory in their view; although the design of all those hymns is to describe the love of God to sinners in Christ Jesus. They all treat of him in some view or other; for there are many extensive, and all very glorious views, in which his person, offices, works, and ways, may be considered. Some treat of his high praises as God-man, describing his person, as the infinite treasury of grace and glory. Some celebrate the matchless deeds of his life, as the Lord our Righteousness, and the complete atonement made for sin by the sacrifice of himself. Others, in language and sentiments truly sublime, sing the endless victories of his resurrection, and the prevailing efficacy of his intercession. Several of them treat of his most blessed government, when he sets up his throne in the hearts of his willing people, and saves them from sin, and death, and every enemy; while others foretell the great day of the Lord when he will come to judge all flesh, will take his redeemed home, and the whole heaven shall be filled with his glory. Besides, the Psalms treat of

this wonderful person, not only from the beginning of time, but also from the ages of eternity; they discover the undertakings of his love before all worlds in the covenant of the Trinity—his fulfilling the covenant engagements in time—and his bestowing covenant blessings from henceforth and for ever. What an extensive view do they give us of the loving kindness of Immanuel, reaching from everlasting to everlasting! And in all these respects the Psalms are of inestimable value with believers; for their use the Holy Spirit has recorded them; and herein they learn what sentiments they are to form of God the Saviour, with what gratitude they should speak of him, and with what holy joy they should sing the triumph of redeeming love. The Psalms were fitted for this purpose, when, with the apostle, any one can say, "I will sing with the Spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."

In order to remedy this great evil, I have prefixed the subject of every Psalm in this collection, that the congregation might have a key of the true sense, and each might know what particular grace was to be exercised in singing it. This will help somewhat to keep up harmony in the understanding. But it will not be without some discord, until the subject treated of in the book of psalms be made very plain, and their application to Jesus Christ be well settled. For this end I have finished some years ago a translation of the Psalms, with a treatise upon their use and design; it was computed to make two large volumes in octavo, entitled, "An Essay towards a new translation of the Bible." In which I have been engaged, as opportunity has offered, above thirty years; but I should have published nothing more of it in my lifetime than this essay, in which the translation of the book of Psalms would have been given as a specimen of the work. It has laid me by so long, that I am not very sanguine about the publication. Yet if this little tract should be favourably received, and God should be pleased to make it useful; if some providence should afford me leisure to revise my papers, of which I have no prospect at present, and if they should then appear to me likely to promote the honour of God and the good of his church, I should think it my duty to let my light shine before men. Yet in this, and in everything else, I do earnestly pray; Not my will, Lord, but thine be done.

Another very great abuse arises from not treating Psalm singing as becometh a divine ordinance. There should be great respect paid to what God has appointed, and in the use of which he has promised to meet and to bless his people. We commonly call those the means of grace, to which grace is promised, and by which grace is received, and through which it is increased in the heart. Singing of Psalms is undoubtedly one of those means, but it is amongst us very much neglected, and when used, it is done in so irreverent a manner, that the end of its institution is not attained. God, as has been already proved, has enjoined and enforced it by repeated commands. He has also assigned the reason of them, namely, that whenever we find ourselves happy in him, he would have our joy to flow out this way. And what more proper and significant? singing is only the melody of the heart and God has required it of us as a just service of praise. He has furnished us both with matter and words. He has given us a divine collection of most perfect hymns. And when we use them in humble faith, God will render them the means of exciting, of preserving, and of increasing our holy joy; for the promise is—"The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the holy one of Israel." This promise has been made good in all ages. The blessing has come in the use of means. The church of Christ in praising him has found fresh reason to praise him. While its happy members have been singing together, he has vouchsafed to them his gracious presence, and has given them sweet communications of his heavenly love. They have sung till their hearts burnt within them, inflamed with a sense of his goodness. Then they had delightful experience of the Psalmist's words—"Praise ye the Lord; for it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: for it is pleasant, and praise is comely."

Reader, dost thou find it so? Is it a pleasure to thee to sing Psalms? Dost thou sing them as an ordinance? Dost thou in faith expect a blessing upon thy singing? And is it indeed to thee the means of grace? If it be, use them more, and thou wilt find an increasing blessing; if it be not, consider well what has been said—repent of thine abuse of this precious ordinance—and pray for grace to observe it to the honour of God, to the edification of others, and to the profit of thine own soul; the Lord give thee a right understanding in this matter.

The neglect of it as an ordinance has led many people entirely to neglect it. I have scarce ever seen a congregation, in which every one joined in singing. This is a very great abuse, because it is defeating the end of God's institution. He commanded Psalms to be sung for mutual edification. It was to be the service of the whole church. All were to join; whereas among us it is performed by some few, and they are sometimes set by themselves in a singing gallery, or in a corner of the church, where they sing to be admired for their fine voices, and others hear them for their entertainment. This is a vile prostitution of church music, and contrary to the letter and spirit both of the Old Testament and also of the New.

The first sacred hymn upon record was sung by Moses and the children of Israel, in which Miriam and all the women joined, and sang the chorus. The second hymn mentioned is said to be sung by the people of Israel without any distinction. When the ark was brought up to the city of David, he and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing: most likely they sang the 68th Psalm, accompanied with

harps, and psalteries, and with timbrels and with cymbals, and with trumpets. David frequently speaks of singing Psalms, as an ordinance in which every one should bear his part, that God might be glorified, and all might be edified. "Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands; sing forth the honour of his name, make his praise glorious. All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing unto thy name. Oh let the nations be glad, and sing for joy; sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth: O sing praises unto the Lord." The sweet singer of Israel chooses this for his subject—"All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord, and thy saints shall bless thee;" and he pursues it through the 148th Psalm. He begins with hallelujah, and intending to have a full chorus to join him in ascribing all glory to God in the highest, he calls upon the holy angels and the heavenly hosts to assist; then he addresses himself to the active powers in nature, which praise God by doing his will and obeying his decree; afterwards he calls upon the earth with everything in it and on it, animate and inanimate; for these fulfil his commandments and keep his laws, and so praise him: at last he comes to mankind, and requires high and low, kings and all people, princes and all judges of the earth, both young men and maidens, old men and children, to join with him in praising the name of the Lord; for his name alone is excellent, his glory is above the earth and heaven; he also exalteth the power of the people, the praise of all his saints, even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him, Hallelujah.

This was the state of the case in the Old Testament. We know from profane history, that the first Christians, in all their meetings, used to sing the praises of Jesus their God. They would not sit down to meet, or rise up, without a Psalm. Jerome says, you might have heard the ploughman and reapers in the fields singing Psalms: yea, several of them could repeat the whole book in Hebrew. Church history relates many particulars upon this subject. But the divine record is decisive. It contains directions how to sing in the congregation: they were to speak, not inwardly, but to themselves, one to another, that they might be heard and the Psalms which they sung might tend to each other's benefit. In another place the apostle commands believers to teach and admonish one another in Psalms and Hymns, recommending such singing as would edify the congregation.

Consider those authorities, ye that have slighted this ordinance. Has it been the uniform practice of the church of God in all ages to join in singing his praises? Was it by his express command? Has he given us a collection of hymns, the very words which we are to sing? Has he promised to accept our thanks and praises, and while believers have been offering them with graceful hearts, has he constantly made them the means of increasing their joy in the Lord? Was it for the benefit of others, that the church might receive edifying, and that each might bear his part by stirring up and exciting thankfulness in one another? Oh do not then neglect such a blessed ordinance: but rather pray the Lord to enable you to rejoice with them that rejoice, to sing with them that sing. Have you not mercies to ask—why then will you not join the church in asking? Have you not mercies out of number to thank God for—why then will you not take your part in praising him for his goodness? Why will you rob yourself of the pleasure of doing it? Why will you not profit your neighbour? And why will you not give God the glory due unto his holy name? Be assured it becometh you well to be thankful at all times and in all places, especially in the great congregation. May you have your share in the service, and your share in the blessing promised to it!

If you are convinced it is part of the public worship of God, in which you are required to join, as much as in the prayers, or in hearing the word, then take heed you join properly. You may sing, and yet greatly abuse this holy ordinance. There are many singers in the church, who take no pains either to keep the time or to follow the tune, and who thereby show they think it of no consequence how the praises of the most high God are sung. Solomon differed much from them. He thought it a great perfection in praising God, that among the many thousands of voices and instruments, which were sounding forth his praise at one time, there was not a single discord to be heard. The scripture has taken notice of it. "They all gave one sound." Why should not we do the same? Nay, is it not the practice of the people of the world? Will they suffer discords in any of their concerts? A public performer would only rise in repute with them, as he plays or sings well. Christian, consider this. Shall they, for their mere amusement, study to have their music free from everything offensive to the ear; and shall not we be equally careful? More especially as we sing to the honour of God and to the edifying of the brethren. We have a most noble subject—divine matter—divine words: we sing of one Lord with one faith. Oh for harmony in some measure suitable! it is much to be wished. I hope it will be attained. Let me earnestly recommend it to every one to sing, and to all who do sing, to learn to sing well; and, till you do, endeavour to avoid another matter of offence.

There are many in our congregations, who seem to think they sing best, when they sing loudest. You may see them often strain themselves with shouting till their faces are as red as scarlet. The worst singers commonly offend this way. A bad coarse voice quite out of tune is to be heard above all, and will take the lead in the congregation; and whenever a number of such meet together in their shouting humour, they put all into confusion. They disorder those, who would sing with feeling and affection. They drown the musical voices of good singers. They offend the outward people. And they do no good to themselves; so they entirely defeat the end of singing. If these lines should fall into the hands of any, who are sensible they have offended in this way, I would beg of them to reform this abuse. Examine your motive. Why would you be uppermost in the congregation? Is your voice the best? Do you think so? Ask one who is a judge; perhaps he may

persuade you. I wish I could prevail with you to sing lower. Indeed, if you once come to feel what you sing, you will reform yourself. A great part of your singing will then be between God and your own soul; you will try to keep up melody in your heart, and that will mend both your voice and judgment. However, it will certainly put you upon trying to please both God and man in singing.

There is another very great and common abuse, which consists in the choice of improper portions. The person to whose judgment this is left is not always one of the wisest in the congregation. He may not understand the Psalms. He may misapply and profane them. It is not a rare thing for him to make them personal, and to apply the glorious things spoken of Christ to trifling parish business. I have heard the quarrels among neighbours sung over on Sundays. The clerk has chosen some passage, applicable entirely to the enemies of the Lord and his Christ, and has most grossly perverted it. The congregation had nothing to do with the dispute, and yet it was brought before them, and they were called upon in an ordinance to interest themselves in it. No doubt, this, and such like abuses, are a very great insult upon God's word and ordinance, and ought to be reformed. The people should understand the Psalm which they are going to sing, and should be well acquainted with its relation to Jesus Christ. They are all required to join; and therefore suitable portions should be chosen, in which all or the greatest part of them are interested; they should sing with one mind, and one heart, as well as in one tune: for which end the knowledge of the Psalm, and of whom, and of what it treats, are absolutely necessary. How can any one sing aright unto the Lord with grace in his heart, unless he understands whether the Psalm relates to praise or thanksgiving, to asking mercies of God, or praising him for them—what grace was to be exercising in seeing, faith, or hope, or love—and what blessing was to be expected from it? These things should be well known, that singing may be a reasonable service, and the means of grace. And to render it such, I have collected portions suitable to most cases of a Christian's experience, and have also prefixed the subject of each. I have also directed the believer with what frame of mind to sing, and what benefit to look for from the word of promise in singing. I wish the attempt may help to make the ordinance better observed, and then I am sure it will be more blessed.

There is another thing relating to the Psalms—I cannot call it an abuse, for it is a total neglect of them. They are quite rejected in many congregations, as if there were no such hymns given by inspiration of God, and as if they were not left for the use of the church and to be sung in the congregation. Human compositions are preferred to divine. Man's poetry is exalted above the poetry of the Holy Ghost. Is this right? The hymns which he revealed for the use of the church, that we might have words suitable to the praises of Immanuel are quite set aside: by which means the word of man has got a preference in the church above the word of God; yea, so far as to exclude it entirely from public worship. It is not difficult to account for this strange practice. Our people had lost sight of the meaning of the Psalms. They did not see their relation to Jesus Christ. This happened when vital religion began to decay among us, more than a century ago. It was a gradual decay, and went on, till at last there was a general complaint against Sternhold and Hopkins. Their translation was treated as poor flat stuff. The wits ridiculed it. The profane blasphemed it. Good men did not defend it. Then it fell into such contempt, that people were ready to receive any thing in its room, which looked rational and was poetical. In this situation, the hymn-makers find the church, and they are suffered to thrust out the Psalms to make way for their own compositions; of which they have supplied us with a vast variety—collection upon collection, and in use, too—new hymns starting up daily—appendix added to appendix—sung in many congregations, yea, admired by very high professors, to such a degree, that the Psalms are become quite obsolete, and the singing of them is now almost as despicable among the modern religious as it was some time ago among the profane.

I know this is a sore place, and I would touch it gently, as gently as I can with any hope of doing good. The value of poems above Psalms is become so great, and the singing of men's words, so as quite to cast out the word of God is become so universal (except in the church of England), that one scarce dares speak upon the subject. Neither would I, having already met with contempt enough for preferring God's hymns to man's hymns, if a high regard for God's most blessed word did not require me to bear my testimony; and if I did not verily believe that many real Christians have taken up this practice without thinking of the evil of it; and when they come to consider the matter carefully will rather thank me, than censure me, for freedom of speech.

Let me observe, then, that I blame nobody for singing human compositions. I do not think it sinful or unlawful, so the matter be scriptural. My complaint is against preferring men's poems to the good word of God, and preferring them to it in the church. I have no quarrel with Dr. Watts, or any living or dead versifier. I would not wish all their poems burnt. My concern is to see Christian congregations shut out divinely inspired Psalms, and take in Dr. Watts' flights of fancy; as if the words of a poet were better than the words of a prophet, or as if the wit of a man was to be preferred to the wisdom of God. When the church is met together in one place, the Lord God has made a provision for their songs of praise—a large collection, and great variety—and why should not these be used in the church according to God's express appointment? I speak not of private people or of private singing, but of the church in its public service. Why should the provision which God has made be so far despised, as to become quite out of use? Why should Dr. Watts, or

any hymn-maker, not only take the precedence of the Holy Ghost, but also thrust him entirely out of the church? Insomuch that the rhymes of a man are now magnified above the word of God, even to the annihilating of it in many congregations. If this be right, men and brethren, judge ye. Examine with candour the evidence which has determined my judgment; so far as it is conclusive may it determine yours.

First, the Psalms are the word of God, with which no work of man's genius can be compared. His attributes are manifest in every page, and prove the author to be divine. His infinite wisdom shines throughout—his goodness appears to be matchless—his truth in every tittle infallible—his power almighty to bless the hearing, reading, and singing of his word. None that trusted in it was ever ashamed: for his faithfulness to it can never fail. The word of the Lord has been tried, and in very great difficulties, yea, in seeming impossibilities but it was always made good. In every trial he "magnified his word above all his name," he made it the means of bringing glory to his name and nature, and every perfection in Deity has been exalted by the faithfulness of God to his word. In this view of the Psalms, what is there to be put in competition with them? What man is like their author? What poetry is to be compared with the Psalms of God? Who can make the singing of any human verses an ordinance, or give a blessing to them, such as is promised, and is given to the singing of Psalms? For what reason then are they set aside in the church? Why are the words of man's genius preferred to the words of inspiration? Singing of Psalms is commanded by divine authority, and commanded as a part of divine worship; not left to man's wisdom how to provide for it, but is expressly provided for in the good word of God. And is not great contempt put upon this infinitely wise provision, when it is quite disused in the church, and man's word is preferred to it? What would you think of them who should throw aside all the scripture, and never read it at all in the congregation? And is it not an offence of the like nature, totally to neglect a part, a chief part of it, which was recorded for the use of the church, and in which its members were to sing the high praises of their God? It is hereby treated as useless and good for nothing. A very gross affront is put upon the love and wisdom which revealed this divine collection of hymns, and the church is deprived of the blessings promised to the singing of them, whereby it is robbed of one of its choicest treasures. If anything be sacrilege, this is. The Psalms are stolen out of the church, and thereby the members are deprived of the blessings promised to the singing of them: for God will not give you the end, if you neglect the means. Frequent are his commands in the Old Testament to sing Psalms, and we have several in the New: For instance, let the word (not something besides it, but the word) of Christ itself dwell in you richly in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs—these are not different things, but different names for the same collection of Psalms, as they treat of different subjects.. Psalms in praise of Immanuel, such especially as have Hallelujah at the beginning or end, are called Hymns, and the Psalms which relate to the spiritual things of Christ and his kingdom, have the title of Song set before them by the Holy Spirit, such as 7, 18, 30, 45, 46, 48, 65, 66, 67, 68, 75, 76, 83, 87, 88, 92, 108, from 110 to 135. These Hymns and spiritual Songs were part of the scripture and part of the Psalms, scripture Hymns and scripture Songs, for the word of Christ in singing them was to dwell in them richly; not man's word, but Christ's; and when the apostle is speaking of them altogether, he calls both the Hymn and spiritual Song a Psalm. We render the word ψαλλοντες making melody, but it means singing the Psalm, and is as if he had said—when you use a Hymn to the praise of God, or a spiritual Song to any spiritual purpose, sing the Psalm so that one may teach and admonish the other. It was a service in which each is commanded to join, and each was to endeavour in it to profit the other. They were to try so to sing with the melody of the heart to the Lord as at the same time to consult each other's profit, that while the Lord was glorified the church might receive edifying. Here is a full authority for the use of Psalms in the church, and a very clear direction how to sing them; and as following this direction was the divine means of making the word of Christ to dwell richly in believers, how poorly must it dwell in them who slight and despise the command, yea, so far as never to sing any Psalms at all. If any real Christian would attend to this reasoning, how can he oppose it? Here is a collection of hymns appointed to be sung in the church by divine authority; but the authority is despised, and the collection is thrown aside. It comes from the inspiration of the Almighty, but the church entirely refuses to use it; is not this doing despite unto the Spirit of grace? The collection is large; and very particular in setting forth the praises of the adorable Immanuel, is it not a gross affront to him to sing none of his praises in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth? as if any praises were good enough for him, or as if he could be praised better in the words which man's wisdom teacheth. Men and brethren consider whether this be not a very gross affront to the word of God, to the Spirit of God, and to the Son of God. Consider it well, and the Lord give you a right understanding in this matter.

Secondly, The singing of men's poems in the church, and setting aside the Psalms given by inspiration of God, is contrary to the prophecies of the Old Testament, and is an attempt to defeat them. They describe the state of the gospel church, and declare there should be great joy and gladness found in it; particularly they mention singing of Psalms, as the outward expression of their inward joy in the Lord. Thus we read, *I Chr. 16:23, 24*, "Sing unto the Lord all the earth, show forth from day to day his salvation: declare his glory among the heathen, his marvellous works among all the nations!" Of the same thing speaketh the prophet Isaiah, *Isa. 56:6, 7*, "Also the sons of the stranger that join themselves to the Lord to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, even every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant, even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in mine house of

prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people." How this joy was to be expressed, is mentioned in Psalm 95. The prophet shows how believers should stir up one another to rejoice in singing Psalms; and St. Paul says this was written of the New Testament church. According to his explanation of the Psalm given in the 3rd and 4th chapters of the Hebrews, the Holy Ghost here calls for the solemn worship of our Saviour, and requires him to be praised with Psalms; he presses this duty, together with public prayer, *ver.* 6, 7, and then demands obedient attention to the word of God, against which no man should harden his heart through unbelief from whence it appears, that praising God solemnly, with singing Psalms, with public prayer, and with hearing the word, are still the ordinances of Christ, and are to continue to-day, even while it is called to-day, unto the end of the world. These prophecies have been fulfilled. The blessed gospel has brought joy and gladness into heathen lands, and this very day Psalms have been sung, and a pure offering of praise has been presented unto the Lord, and it will be presented unto him so long as there is a true church upon earth. What then shall we think of those pretended reformers, who have turned the Psalms out of the church and who are acting as if they would try to defeat these prophecies? I wish they may not be found fighting against God; for they cannot stop their accomplishment. His word cannot be broken. As long as the earth shall continue, Psalms shall be sung in the church of Christ. In it there will always be found thanksgiving and the voice of melody, and these will be expressed in God's own way, in the matter, and words, and form of God's own appointment.

Consider this, ye who believe the scriptures to be the word of God: if you obey from the heart the form of doctrine therein delivered, you will begin to reason thus; yea, methinks I hear one of you say—Since God, by his sovereign grace has put a new song in my mouth, it adds to my joy that he has revealed the very words in which he would have me to praise him. He has foretold that the gospel should be received among the heathen, and that it should produce such effects as I now experience. Glory be to him, he has made me happy in Jesus, and my happiness is not only kept up, but I find it increases by singing the inspired Psalms of the Holy Ghost. Whoever leaves off the singing of Psalms, God forbid I should be of that number, I hope never to act so contrary to the honour of God, and to the profit of mine own soul.

Thirdly, Of the same sentiments has been the church of Christ in all ages: which is a strong argument in favour of Psalm singing. We know, from very clear testimony, that the Psalms were sung in the temple until its final destruction. We are certain that Christ made use of the Psalms. His apostles followed his example. The churches of Corinth, and Ephesus, and Colosse, made the singing of Psalms part of their public worship. Such of the twelve tribes as were scattered abroad, being persecuted for Christ's sake, did sing Psalms when they were in an happy frame; for they were commanded to do it by the apostle James. The church history affords abundant evidence of the use of the Psalms in every country converted to the faith, and of their being sung in the church, as a part of public worship. This has been the case in every age without interruption. The primitive Christians sung in all their church meetings. Eusebius says, in the second century, they sung Psalms in praise of Christ and his deity. In the time of Justin Martyr, instrumental music was abolished, and he highly commends singing with the voice, because, says he, Psalms, with organs and cymbals, are fitter to please children, than to instruct the church. In the third century we read much of Psalm singing. Arius was complained of as a perverter of this ordinance. St. Augustine makes it a high crime in certain heretics, that they sung hymns composed by human wit. The sense in which the church of Christ understood this subject has been, till of late years, always one and uniform. Now we leave the ancient beaten path. But why? Have we found a better? How came we to be wiser than the prophets, than Christ, than his apostles, and the primitive Christians, yea, than the whole church of God? They with one consent have sung Psalms in every age. Here I leave the reader to his own reflections. There is one plain inference to be made from hence, none can easily mistake it. May he see it in his judgment, and follow it in his practice.

Fourthly, Singing of Psalms in the church is an ordinance commanded of God, prophesied of in the Old Testament, and hitherto fulfilled in the New. That Psalm singing is one of the means of grace has been shown before. It is part of public worship, enjoined of God, and to which he has promised his blessing. Now when you lay aside Psalms in the church, you at the same time cast out the ordinance: for they are inseparably one. The Psalm is the ordinance. Your practice speaks, as if you said—"We will neglect the means of increasing our joy in God; for we want no growing love to him, nor fresh communications of his love to us." Surely this is the language of those persons who live in the constant neglect of one of the divine ordinances. God appointed it in vain as to them. They make no more use of the Psalms than if there were no such Hymns in being. And is not this opposing his authority? Is it not ungrateful to throw away his appointed means, and to think you can please him better with singing your own poetry than his? Is it not hurtful to yourselves? for in seeking the promised blessing in the way of will-worship, you certainly cannot find it.

Fifthly, The blessing is promised to the ordinance. You cannot have the end without the means. The Psalms were revealed that we might in singing them express our joy in God, and thereby improve it. They were for the exercise of grace, and for the increase of grace; that we might sing with grace in our hearts, and make one another's hearts warmer by singing. The word is one of the means of grace; by hearing it, faith cometh; by

constant hearing, faith is established. If the word was never heard, how could faith come? If the word be entirely neglected, how can faith grow? Prayer is one of the means of grace: it is appointed in order to keep up communion with God, and to bring down daily supplies of mercies from him: Could those be had without asking? Certainly they could not. Singing of Psalms is also one of the means of grace. How can the blessing promised to the means be received, if no Psalms be sung? What sort of a church would it be, in which the word was never read, nor prayers nor singing of Psalms, nor any means of grace used? It could not be a church of Christ, because his presence with, and his blessings to his people, are promised to them in the use of the means. The blessing accompanies the ordinance, and is promised unto it; God has joined them together, and they must not be put asunder. He will give honour, he does give honour to his own means. He makes them answer the end of their institution. When the Psalms are sung in faith, they do rejoice the heart. The Holy Spirit blesses the singing, and causes mutual joy to abound, which is

Sixthly, Another reason for preferring divine psalms to man's poems. The Psalms were for the church service. When the members met, we read of their singing together, both in the Old Testament and in the New. It was their joint offering of praise. The Psalms were appointed to be sung in the congregation, that one might admonish another, which we do, by joining with them, by making the word of Christ dwell more richly in them, and by exercising their graces with ours. Thus we show our fellowship in the gospel. When we all sing the same psalm, it is as if the church had but one mouth to glorify God. And we never enjoy more of the presence of God, than while we are thus praising him together with thankful hearts. The Lord, who instituted the ordinance, promised this blessing to it; but when his Psalms are thrust out, and human compositions sung in their room, what reason have the sinners to expect that he will give his good Spirit to quicken their hearts, and to inflame their devotion? He did not promise mutual edification, but to the use of his own means. He would have believers to teach and to exhort one another, but it was in singing his own Psalms: and when they do, he has met them and blessed them, and always will; but he has given no promise to be present whenever the church meet together in public to sing their own compositions, or to make them full of joy with the light of his countenance, when they have been doing despite to his Spirit, and putting dishonour upon his word.

Perhaps these sentiments may arise from my great attachment to the word of God, with which others may not be affected as I am; for I am persuaded it is not possible for me to set too high a value upon the holy scriptures—as the revelation of the will of God, I want words to express my respect for them—as the revelation of his good will in Jesus, I reverence them next to himself. What more precious? What more delightful? They are, indeed, more precious than gold, yea, than much fine gold; and the Psalms are sweeter than honey, yea, than the honey dropping from the comb. I find them so. They are my daily study, and daily delight. I do not boast, but praise. The more I read, the more I admire them. The description of Jesus in them is sweet; the meditation of him is sweeter than all other sweets. It often tastes so much of heaven, that it seems to me I cannot possibly bestow so much admiration upon the Psalms, as they deserve. This is my settled judgment confirmed by experience. I cannot help taking particular notice of this, because it fully confirms the arguments which have been before used.

Experience demonstrates that God does bless the singing of Psalms in the church, and does not bless the singing of men's hymns. It is a melancholy matter of fact that in many congregations there is no reading of God's word, no singing of God's word. It is almost laid aside, even the great ordinance of God for all saving purposes. And what has followed? Truly, what might be expected; yea, what could not but follow. The Holy Spirit has been grieved, and has withdrawn his powerful presence. For want of which a deadness that may be felt is in such places. Of this good men have complained to one another, and are humbled for it before God. They find public worship without power. Prayer is lifeless. Preaching is voice and nothing more. It may be the truth, but the hearers are apt to fall asleep over it, and the preacher is no more animated than if he was telling an old story. The channel of divine communication is quite stopped up: hence Ichabod may be seen and felt too upon such congregations. Reader, if thou art alive to God in thine own heart, thou knowest this to be true. And how does it affect thee? Certainly thou wilt join with me in begging of God to revive his work among us, and to put glory upon his ordinances. Oh that the Lord would return with his gracious presence to his worshipping people. May the Holy Spirit lead them to see their error in neglecting of established means of grace, especially his word read and sung. And whenever he does this, and wherever they put honour upon his word, there will he certainly put life and power into the ordinances, and the congregations shall again experience that God is among them of a truth.

And as God does not bless the singing of human compositions in his church, so it is a certain matter of fact, that he does bless the singing of his own Psalms. If the eyes of your understanding be opened, look around; where is the power of God most to be found? Among whom is he chiefly carrying on his work? And where are the liveliest congregations? If you know the present state of religion in this land, you can easily find them. God has made them very conspicuous. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. The builder of it did not intend it should. His gifts and graces are therefore conferred, that the giver may have all the glory. And who are most enriched with his gifts and graces? Are they not such as he has brought to use the means most? Who honour his word, never failing to make the reading of it part of public worship, and who never meet, but

they sing out of the word the praises of their God. Among these the Lord the Spirit does work with power, and they do find in singing his Psalms, what they never find in singing men's poems. He makes all their church ordinances lively and edifying. He enables them to draw near to God in prayer, and they have happy communion with him; he hears, and answers. The word preached is mighty through God. Sinners are awakened. Mourners are comforted. Believers are strengthened. The word sung is also accompanied with the same power; the Psalms are made an ordinance indeed. The Holy Spirit works in and by them to keep up holy joy in believing hearts. He promised this, and the promise is fulfilled at thus very hour. "The Lord shall comfort Sion, he will comfort all her waste places, and he will make her wilderness like Eden and her desert like the garden of the Lord, joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody." Blessed be God for these favours now bestowed upon the Church of England. This prophecy is ours. Adored for ever be his love. He is now with us of a truth, and he has turned our wilderness into the garden of the Lord. We do not triumph for this in ourselves. We do not look down with contempt upon others. No, no. We acknowledge it to be the Lord's doing, to the praise of the glory of his own grace; and to him we look for the continuance of this inestimable blessing. O that he would bestow it abundantly upon those congregations, who have the form without the power. This is the fervent prayer of my heart. I am sure our joy will increase by their sharing with us. May the good Lord revive his work in all his churches, and may the life and power vouchsafed to some be found in all.

What can any unprejudiced person infer from hence? Is not the case plain? Where is the presence of God most to be found? Among the singers of poems, or the singers of Psalms? What says matter of fact? It speaks to the point, and determines in favour of God's word. The Holy Spirit does not put honour upon man's poems, when set up in the church in opposition to his divine Hymns. Yea, he disgraces them. He pours contempt upon them, as it might be expected he would; for he leaves the singers to themselves, and then their performance is without life and power. It keeps up no communion with God. It administers no holy joy. It is not the means of grace, but degenerates into a mere entertainment, and is the same thing in the church, that music is in the playhouse.

How can that be, says one, I am a witness to the contrary; I have found profit in singing hymns, and I am sure I have received pleasure. You may fancy so, but perhaps it is only fancy, for your practice confutes your profession. God has revealed the Psalms for the use of the church, he has commanded them to be sung in it, and has promised to meet his rejoicing people, and in singing to make their joy abound; but you despise the command, and therefore you can have no title to the promise. You cannot have the end without the means: while you slight the ordinance, how can you possibly receive the blessing promised to it? For the Holy Ghost will not vouchsafe his joy to them who seek it in opposition to his sovereign will; so that you might be pleased, but profited you could not. The profit is God's blessing upon the use of his own means, but you did not use the means; nay, you despised his, and followed your own self-will. What profit could such singing bring you? What fellowship could you have with God in it, or what joy in God increased by it? You may bring your poems into the church, and may be vastly delighted with performing them. So is the vainest creature alive at the opera. The pleasure in both cases arises from the same cause. The ear is pleased with the harmony, some animal joy is excited, a fine tune, well played, well sung, a very agreeable entertainment; but there could be no more spiritual edification in one than in the other; because neither of them was the ordinance of God.

What! say some, is it unlawful to sing human compositions in the church? How can that be? Why, they sing them at such a place, and such a place: great men, and good men, ay, and lively ministers too, sing them. Will you set up your judgment against theirs?

It is an odious thing to speak of one's self, except it be to magnify the grace of God. What is my private judgment? I set it up against nobody in indifferent things; I would wish to yield to every man's infirmity; for I want the same indulgence myself. But in the present case the scripture, which is our only rule of judgment, has not left the matter indifferent. God has given us a large collection of hymns, has commanded them to be sung in the church, and has promised his blessing to the singing of them. No respect here must be paid to names or authorities, although they be the greatest on earth, because no one can dispense with the command of God, and no one can by his wit compose hymns to be compared with the Psalms of God. I want a name for that man, who should pretend that he could make better hymns than the Holy Ghost. His collection is large enough; it wants no addition. It is perfect as its author, and not capable of any improvement. Why in such a case would any man in the world take it into his head to sit down to write hymns for the use of the church? It is just the same as if he was to write a new Bible, not only better than the old, but so much better, that the old may be thrown aside. What a blasphemous attempt! And yet our hymn-mongers, inadvertently I hope, have come very near to this blasphemy; for they shut out the Psalms, introduce their own verses into the church, sing them with great delight, and as they fancy with great profit; although the whole practice be in direct opposition to the command of God, and therefore cannot possibly be accompanied with the blessing of God.

If any one be offended at my freedom of speech, I am sorry for it. I thought I had liberty to give mine opinion, especially in a matter wherein the honour of God, and of his word, required me to speak openly. Let this be mine apology. If you are not convinced, if you will still sing human compositions in preference to divine; pray do not quarrel with me. I am a man of peace. Go on your way, and let me go on mine. Let me sing God's psalms, and you may sing anybody's hymns. I have borne my testimony. Forgive me this once, and after I have closed up the evidence with a very good witness, against whom the admirers of hymns can have no objection, I promise herein to offend you no more. He is no less a person than the great Dr. Watts himself. He speaks full to the point, and gives his testimony very distinctly. He never intended, he says, to thrust the Psalms of God out of the church. His words in the preface to his hymns are these: "Far be it from my thoughts to lay aside the book of Psalms in public worship; few can pretend so great a value for them as myself; it is the most artful, most devotional, and divine collection of poetry, and nothing can be supposed more proper to raise a pious soul to heaven than some parts of that book; never was a piece of experimental divinity so nobly written, and so justly revered and admired." Happy would it have been for the Christian world if his followers had stopped just where he did. He declares it was far from his thoughts to do what they have done. It never came into his head to lay aside the book of Psalms in public worship. Think of this and weigh it carefully, ye that idolize Dr. Watts, and prefer his poems to the infallible word of God. It would be well for you, if you valued psalms as much as he did; for he says none valued them more. Then you would have looked upon them in his light; for having already in your hands the most devotional and the most divine collection, you would not have thought of any other, knowing it was impossible to have a better, but you would have used this, and would have found it too, as Dr. Watts did, the most proper to raise the soul to heaven. Blessed sentiments! I honour the memory of Dr. Watts for this glorious testimony. I can say nothing that can bear harder upon those persons, who, contrary to his opinion, have entirely left off singing the Psalms of God in the church. He never intended to countenance such a practice. He declares it was far from his thoughts, yea, he abhorred the very thought, and in so saying he has upon record condemned it. Here I rest the matter. If the admirers of Dr. Watts will not be determined by his authority, I am sure they will not be mine; and therefore I take my leave of them. Farewell. May the Lord guide you into all truth.

There are several abuses among us relative to the music, which I wish to see reformed, and some of which I would point out. We have many good psalm tunes, excellently composed and fitted for public worship. These should be studied, in order that they may be well sung, and properly applied. Sung well to avoid the tedious drawling manner in use in most of our churches, which gives offence to worldly people, and makes the ordinance dull and heavy to believers. Properly applied, and suited to the subject, that the sound may, as near as possible, express the sense; for want of understanding or attending to this, we very often hear a light tune to a mournful prayer, and heavy music set to a joyful psalm, which are grievous discords. In the service of God everything should be solemn. Our own minds require it, as well as his greatness; but especially in praising him, we should try to shut out whatever would distract us, or dishonour him. When the heart is affected, or desires to be duly affected, with a sense of the exceeding riches of his mercy in Jesus, the psalm and the tune should help to excite, and to keep up the heavenly flame. If the psalm be proper for this purpose, the tune should not defeat it. This was much studied in the primitive church. They had great simplicity in their psalm singing, which we are told was corrupted by the heretics. Complaint is made particularly of Arius, that he perverted singing into an entertainment. He had a taste for music, and he composed several light, frothy tunes, by which he sought to please trifling people who, with him, neither loved the God, nor the praises of the God of the Christians. Herein he succeeded. His music was admired, and did a great deal of hurt. Let us take warning from hence. As far as we can, let our praises of God be sung with such music as will solemnize our hearts, and keep them in tune to make melody unto the Lord.

I will only mention one thing more, which is a great impropriety, and to me very offensive, and that is the posture generally used among us in singing.

Suppose there had been nothing at all said about it in the scripture, judge ye with yourselves, men and brethren, whether it be respectful and becoming to sit down to sing. When subjects go upon any joyful occasion to address their sovereign, is it a custom in any nation of the world to do it sitting? Does the person who pays homage sit, or he who receives it? But it is not left to ourselves, or to what we may think right or wrong. The case is determined in scripture, and there are precedents to go upon. The singers and musicians stood, when they performed in the temple service: so did all the people, *1 Chr. 2:28*, &c. "The office of the Levites was to wait on the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of the Lord in the courts and in the chambers, and in the purifying of all holy things, and the work of the service of the house of God; and to stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord, and likewise at evening." This was their appointment; and we read of their fulfilling it, *2 Chr. 5:12*, where it is said, "they stood at the east end of the altar;" and we are certain that all the congregation of Israel stood at the same time: for it is expressly mentioned. When the royal prophet is encouraging the priests and people in the heavenly work of praise, he thus addresses the priests, *Psa. 134*, "Behold, bless ye the Lord all ye servants of the Lord, who by night stand in the house of the Lord: lift up your hands in the sanctuary and bless the Lord. The lord that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Sion." So again, speaking to priests and people, *Psa. 135*, "Praise ye the Lord, praise ye the name

of the Lord; praise him O ye servants of the Lord: ye that stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God, praise ye the Lord, for the Lord is good: sing praises unto his name for it is pleasant." Standing to sing is recommended in those scriptures, and was accordingly practised both by clergy and laity; when they thanked the Lord morning and evening in the words of David the man of God, they sung his praises standing. It is a decent posture. People of fashion think it so; for they stand up even in the playhouse at the Hallelujahs in the oratorio of the Messiah. Our very good church people think so; for if they sit down at the Psalm, they are sure to stand up at the Gloria patri. It is indeed highly becoming the majesty of the great King of heaven and earth, and it is also expressive of our readiness to join our brethren in praising his holy name. As such I would recommend it. The venerable practice of antiquity has something more to enforce it than mere propriety; at least it calls upon me to try to keep up an uniformity with the church of Christ in this particular. But if you think otherwise, and prefer sitting, lolling, or any lazy indolent posture, I will not unchristian you. We may differ, and not quarrel; nay, I will not quarrel with you, if you will but let me observe, when I see any person irreverently sitting down, after he has been called upon to sing to the praise and glory of God, and after a suitable psalm has been given out, it seems to me, as if he said—indeed his behaviour speaks louder than any words can—"You may sing, but I will not—I will exercise no grace—I want no more grace—I have no melody in my heart, and therefore I will make none with my mouth—I will take myself away while you are singing, and I will sit down to show that I have no part with you in this ordinance."

The abuses here complained of are not to be easily remedied. I know they are not; but I have done my duty. Some of them are of long standing, not soon to be rooted out. Some are the consequences of mere profession, which renders all ordinances ineffectual; for they are only blessed to any one, as he observes them in true faith. Others are not looked upon to be profanations of the ordinance, but refinements of it; against such I only deliver my sentiments, not from the chair, as a pope; but I beg leave to give my opinion, and if I could, I would do it without offence. If any one be offended, I am sorry for it. I would not hurt a worm. However, we are all agreed I hope in one thing, and let us improve that. It is our joint desire to please God in singing his praises. If this be pursued, it will tend to reform every abuse relating to this ordinance. His glory should be aimed at with a single eye. When this is the ruling principle, the heart would enter into the service, and then it would soon influence the outward man. There would be no neglect, no contempt, no misbehaviour, if gratitude to God in Christ inspired our songs. We should love to present such praises and in such a manner, as would best express our thankfulness, and we should study to avoid everything which would render them unprofitable to ourselves or others or dishonourable to him.

Let me intreat you, men and brethren, never to forget this point. Set God always before you, whenever you are going to sing Psalms. Do it as in his presence and to his glory. If you think it your bounder duty to sing with your voices to be heard of one another, take heed that you sing with your hearts unto the Lord. Let it be the service of every faculty, and each exerted to the utmost. Praise your blessed Immanuel with your warmest gratitude. Give him the best you have. He richly deserves it. And remember you thereby pay him nothing again; you only give him his own. Your gratitude is the gift of his grace, and by it you only make acknowledgment of your vast obligations to him. O beg of him then to enable you to praise him with a growing sense of your debt, and of his increasing favours. And may you so praise him, as to find fresh reason to continue your praises from day to day, and for evermore.

Whoever is in this humble happy frame, will be kept from a temptation, into which most of our hymn singers have fallen. I have heard several of them, who would by no means be thought common rate understandings, object to Sternhold and Hopkins. They wonder I would make use of this version, which they think is poor flat stuff, the poetry is miserable, and the language low and base. To which I answer: they had a scrupulous regard for the very words of scripture, and to those they adhered closely and strictly; so much as to render the versification not equal to Mr. Pope. I grant, it is not always smooth; it is only here and there brilliant. But what is a thousand times more valuable, it is generally the sentiment of the Holy Spirit. That is very rarely lost. And this should silence every objection—it is the word of God. Moreover the version comes nearer to the original than any I have ever seen, except the Scotch, which I have made use of, when it appeared to me better expressed in the English. You may find fault with the manner of eking out a verse for the sake of rhyme; but what of that? Here is every thing great, and noble, and divine, although not in Dr. Watts's way or style. It is not, like his, fine sould and florid verse; as good old Mr Hall used to call it, *Watts's Jingle*. I do not match those Psalms with what is now admired in poetry; although time was, when no less a man than Rev. T. Bradbury, in his sober judgement, thought so meanly of Watts's Hymns as commonly to term them *Watts's Whymns*. And indeed, compared to the scripture, they are like a little taper to the sun; as for his Psalms, they are so far from the mind of the Spirit, that I am sure if David was to read them, he would not know any one of them to be his.

Besides, you are offended at the scripture style, and Dr. Watts must mend it. This is owing to a very false taste. For the scripture wants no mending; nay, it is always worse for mending. It is plain in majesty. God has not written it to please the imagination, but to convert the heart, and to comfort and to edify the soul;

therefore the inspired writers have used great plainness of speech. They disclaim all painted language and oratorical colouring. One of them, speaking for the rest, says, "We have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God; which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." To his words the understanding should bow, and with reverence receive them; because they are his. Curiosity should be dumb. It should make no inquiry: "Are they fine words, poetical, dressed up with flowers and metaphors, brilliant as Cowley, smooth as Pope." No, they are not; but they are revealed to make the man of God wise unto salvation, and they do. As such, the finest poetry of man is no more to be compared with them, than man is to be compared with God. His word is the great instrument of salvation. It is the ordinance of God for every saving purpose. He works in it and by it, and therefore it is plain and simple that the glory may not be given to the means themselves, but to his almighty grace, which makes them effectual. How unlikely is the word preached so to change a sinner's heart, that he shall be as much a new creature, as if a devil was made an angel; and yet this effect is daily produced, and by plain preaching too. Thus the most successful preacher that ever was, declares, "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God." And his power is promised, and is also experienced to this very day in the use of the means of grace. God does give his blessing to them. What more simple than the sacraments? Yet through Christ working mightily in them, they do answer the end of their institution? What so unlikely as prayer to obtain all needful blessings? And yet it is certain matter of fact that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. So the Psalms, not trimmed up with human embellishments, but in the simple dress of scripture, do communicate holy joy in the Lord. He blesses the means, because they are his own means, and when used in faith, he never fails to render them effectual. Here then let us look, not at fine words, but at God's word. Let us not be offended at its simplicity; for it is purposely so. It is written for profit and not for amusement. As an instrument, it has not the virtue in itself that the excellency of the power exerted by it may be of God. He would have all the glory. Our own joy in singing, and our neighbour's edification, shall not arise from fine poetry, but from his effectual grace. So much is it to be wished that this was more regarded in singing Psalms. Then should we hear no more of this objection; but believers in the use of this, and of all the means of grace, would be seeking not entertainment, but communion with God, which is our highest privilege, and they would be expecting the improvement of it, which is their highest happiness.

Another objection may be made to this collection. If all the Psalms be alike the word of God, why should these be selected, and the rest excluded? I do not exclude any, not a letter or tittle. They are all of equal the inspiration of the Almighty. There is the same divine stamp and impression upon every word. For which reason I reverence what is left, as much as these; but these are sufficient for our use, and these, if rightly used, will lead us to understand and to value the rest. If any thing here said should be the means of explaining the subject of the book of Psalms, and of enabling believers to see more of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, then they will not only value this collection, but will also, as occasion offers, sing the rest with increasing melody in their hearts unto the Lord.

The collection of Psalms, which I have here made, cannot be sung aright by any one, unless he thus aims at the glory of God. He must be a true believer in Jesus, and made sensible of the Father's love to him in his Son; because they are chiefly songs of praise, and require the music of the heart; he who is in tune to make the best melody, has the deepest sense of his obligations to free grace. He has found redemption through the blood of Jesus, and is convinced of his acceptance through the righteousness of Jesus. He sees all blessings, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, provided for him by the Father's love in the Son's fulness and by the faith of the operation of the Holy Spirit he receives them, as he wants them, day by day. He feels himself a poor needy creature, unworthy of the least of those blessings, and while he is in this humble frame he is thankful for the least. Then he is most disposed to give the glory of all his mercies to the eternal Three, and to acknowledge his debt in every appointed way. This makes him desirous of profiting others by singing the praises of that good God, who has so exceedingly loved him, and herein he has an especial regard to his brethren in Christ. As a church-member he frequents ordinances, enters into the spirit of them, prays in the Holy Ghost, hears and mixes faith with the word, sings with the congregation, and with his heart and voice tries to increase their melody. He lives the Christian. In his walk and conversation he shows forth the praises of God. He glorifies his Father which is in heaven, before men, and lets them see that they who are happy believers in Jesus, have found their heaven upon earth. Thus he goes on his way, singing and rejoicing in the Lord—ready to join the great concert of saints and angels—yea, he does join, ascribing with them all the good he has, and hopes for, to the free grace of the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity.

Reader, art thou one of this happy number? Is thy heart in tune to sing Psalms of praise to thy God? Is thy Father which art in heaven, and dost thou love him for the unspeakable gift of his Son? Until he be known to thee in this dear relation, thou canst not be happy in him either in earth or heaven. If thou art thinking he has mercy in store for thee, how wast thou brought to believe it? Was it in God's appointed way, and in his means? Didst thou hear his word declaring what thy state was, and didst thou yield to its

testimony, persuaded thou wast under guilt and in great danger? Wast thou convinced of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, how abominably filthy it made thee in the sight of an holy God—how guilty in the sight of a just God, and how utterly helpless it has left thee in thyself? Did this conviction follow thee? Wast thou made deeply and thoroughly sensible, that thou canst do nothing for thyself, but hasten on thy ruin? Such is thy captivity to sin, all the powers and faculties of thy soul and body are in such bondage to it, that thou canst do nothing but serve it; yea, thou art such a willing slave, that if God leave thee to thyself, thou wilt go on sinning through time, and sinning through eternity.

Didst thou never see thyself in this state? The scripture declares, that thou art by nature a child of wrath—and dost not thou believe the word of God? Are its threatenings an idle tale? What! art thou still asleep in the arms of sin, in the midst of the thunder of the vengeance of God—still dreaming of happiness in the ways of sin, which God assures thee in his word will lead thee to destruction? Oh desperate delusion! May God deliver thee from it. May the eternal Spirit accompany his own message, and send it to thy heart. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

If thou hast been made sensible of thy danger, what thinkest thou of Christ? If thou hast seen thyself a lost sinner, who is to save thee? To whom, or to what cost thou look for help? To man, or to God? To thyself, or to Christ?

To thy works, or his? Is Christ become thine only object? Examine with care; for there is but one right way to the city of habitation. "I am the way," says Jesus. Be assured there is salvation for thee in no other. Nothing can justify thee, but his righteousness. His all-sufficient grace alone can keep thee in the way to heaven. He alone can present thee spotless there before the throne. Every other hope will disappoint thee but hope in Jesus. One day all the rest will prove refuges of lies. If thou buildest on them now with confidence, they will fail thee at the bar of God. Thou wilt then find that other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

If thou art enabled to build upon this rock, happy art thou. Hail, thou that art highly favoured; the Lord is with thee. He has encouraged thee to place the whole weight of thy salvation upon the work of Jesus, who is Immanuel, the Creator, and the Supporter of all worlds, visible and invisible. Trust in him, and be not afraid; for he is almighty to save. And he has given thee his infallible promises to satisfy thee, that in him thou art safe from all thy sins, and from all thine enemies. Oh how establishing are his own words! Thus he speaketh to thee: "Whosoever cometh unto me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: he is like a man who built a house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock, and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded upon a rock." How happy is thy state! Thou art come to him at his bidding, thou hast heard his sayings, and art doing them in faith; survey thy safety and bless the Lord. Thou art the wise man who builds on a foundation contrived by infinite wisdom, and supported by almighty power, "Behold," says the Father, "I lay in Sion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone," &c. The Father chose his co-equal Son, on whom he would build his whole church; he is therefore called an elect foundation; and sure, as sure as God can make it, his will and word, his arm and love secure the foundation and every thing built upon it. Try it again and again, and thou wilt find how sure it is. This is another of its divine excellences: it is a tried foundation, none ever built on it and were confounded. Believers have made full trial of it in every age, and it always answered their hopes; indeed how could it fail them? For the divine Architect has so strengthened every part of his structure that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. How precious then is this foundation! "To them that believe he is precious." All the beauties and pleasures in heaven and earth are to be found in his fulness, and in the creature only as a drop out of the ocean. Unsearchable riches are his; so are eternal glories. Blessed is the man who is living upon his fulness. While he is receiving out of it grace for grace, oh how precious is Jesus! especially while he is hoping to receive out of the same fulness the glory that is to be revealed; for he shall not be disappointed of his hope, because "the righteous hath an everlasting foundation." He is built upon the rock of ages, and is kept there by the power of God. Oh happy, thrice happy believer. Again, survey thy mercies. See how many, how great they are. To thy body, to thy soul, family, church, national mercies, sure and covenant mercies. Who is like unto thee saved by the Lord? The Father is thine with all his love. The Son is thine with all his salvation. The Holy Spirit is thine in all his offices, to comfort, to strengthen and to sanctify thee, to lead thee safe by his counsel, till he brings thee unto glory. And this is also thine with its richest blessings: eternal life is the free gift of God to thee through Jesus Christ thy Lord. Oh, what has God done for thee! Saved from deserved destruction, and saved with such a salvation, so wrought out for thee, so secured to thee, and for ever, what could God do more? Now thou hast learned the subject of praise, and canst make sweet melody with these words: "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry; he brought me up also out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings; and he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." None can learn this new song, except he be redeemed from the earth; a saved sinner, delivered from the pit of corruption, and finding his feet set fast upon the rock of salvation, sings it from experience. He feels what he sings. His heart and mouth go together in blessing the Lord his God. Now he wants no comment upon the

alms of praise. He is taught them by the Holy Spirit, and can sing them with delight. A grateful sense of the divine favours freely conferred upon him keeps him in tune, humble and thankful. And this is the right frame of mind to offer up the sacrifice of praise, with which God is well pleased. He accepts it from saints and angels round the throne, and he accepts it also from us, when we present it in their spirit. The humblest upon earth pay him the highest service, as he declares — "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me."

Reader, is this thine experience? Dost thou sing Psalms, and didst thou learn to sing them in this way? Wast thou enabled by faith to love God in Christ, and art thou now blessing him with a rejoicing heart? Is his glory the end and aim of all thy services? If it be (but beware of mistakes) then thou art accepted in Jesus, and so are thy songs. May thy delight in singing them increase. I wish to be a helper of thy joy, and to that end let us take a short review of the subject. Thou wilt see the graces needful for singing of Psalms, and if thou findest God has bestowed them upon thee, then make use of them. Offer up through Jesus Christ thy sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of thy lips, giving thanks to his name.

1. Dost thou understand the subject of the book of Psalms, and enter into it in singing? Dost thou see the praises of Immanuel celebrated throughout, and canst thou take up the words and sing them with melody in thy heart? Being one with Jesus by faith, and a partaker of his fulness, thou wilt see a new glory in the Psalms; for thou wilt read thine own interest in all that Christ is and has, and wilt make use of it too, receiving from him grace for grace. This will inspire thy soul with warm devotion to the Lord Christ, and will lend thee greatly to prize this blessed book. Thou wilt delight to

2. Study the scripture names of it. Dost thou attend to them? Have they their proper weight with thee, so as to convince thee thoroughly, that the Saviour in his several offices and works is the person treated of in the book of Psalms? The different names are only to describe him in different views as the Giver of every blessing in earth and heaven, Hymns to celebrate his praises, Spiritual Songs to set forth the glory of his kingdom, and the happiness of his subjects. Psalms and Hymns, and spiritual Songs, altogether intended to raise the affections of the soul to as high a pitch of love to Immanuel, as we are capable of, while in the body.

3. When thou art reading the Old Testament or the New, and, observing the passages in which the Psalms are mentioned, do they farther confirm thee in the belief of their being written concerning Christ? And mixing faith with them, do they warm thy heart with gratitude to Jesus, and stir thee up to sing his praises vntn increasing delight? But, above all, consider

4. How thou singest the Psalms. Examine. Art thou made a new creature in Christ Jesus, and a partaker of his Spirit? Dost thou then sing with thine understanding, and with thy heart, singing Psalms as an ordinance of God to exercise grace, and to increase the grace which he has given? And dost thou indeed find it profitable to thyself, and edifying to others?

5. Dost thou keep up the harmony in thy life? Is thy walk in concord with thy Psalms? Art thou showing forth the praises of Jesus in thy conversation? What! Is all consistent and of a piece? Are thy heart, and voice, and life, in tune to thank the Lord for his goodness, and to declare the wonders which he hath done for thy soul? Oh this is heavenly music. Happy man, to whom it is given thus to live the Christian. May there be no discord in thy tempers and walk, but may all within and without thee conspire in sweet concert to bless thy Lord and thy God.

6. If the Lord has thus enabled thee to sing, and to love his praises, then, art thou humble enough to study to please others as well as thyself in singing, that they may be edified? If there has been any abuse in this ordinance, dost thou stand corrected, and art willing to reform? Is it thy desire in public singing to give no offence to outward people, but above all to give none to the church of God? This is the Christian temper. Show it. Let it appear that the mind is in thee, which was also in Christ Jesus. Aim, in singing, at the profit of others. Look not to thyself alone, that thou bearest thy part, with thine understanding, heart, and voice, but endeavour also to edify the church. See thy neighbour be benefited according to the command: "Teach and admonish one another in Psalms," &c. Let this and all other things in the congregation be done to edifying.

If, upon careful inquiry, thou dost understand those truths, dost thou experience the power and comfort of them? Art thou indeed a living Christian, capable of singing them with melody in thy heart unto the Lord? If this be thy happy case, then accept this collection of psalms which I here present to thee, not in preference to any of those here omitted, or to exclude any of them, but only as a sufficient number for our regular service. Go and make use of them, and the Lord be with thee. May he render them profitable to thine own soul, and edifying to his body the church. Pray for grace to glorify him more in this ordinance. It will soon be thy whole employment. Yet a very little while, and thou wilt have nothing to do but to enjoy and to praise Immanuel for evermore. May thy heart now feel something of this heaven; and if it please him, may thy happiness daily increase in the enjoyment of, and thankfulness for, all covenant mercies, till thou art admitted to the general assembly and church of the first-born, to join with them in ascribing all the glory of thy

salvation to the father, Son and Holy Spirit, three persons in one Godhead, to whom be equal and everlasting praises. Amen.

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