

T H E
PSALMS AND PARAPHRASES.

A S E R M O N

BY THE

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PREACHED IN

TOWNSEND STREET CHURCH,

B E L F A S T ,

ON SABBATH EVENING, 17TH MARCH, 1861.

BELFAST:

W. M'COMB, HIGH-STREET; O. AITCHISON, HIGH-STREET; AND ALEXANDER
S. MAYNE, DONEGALL SQUARE EAST.

1861.

LUKE XIX. 37, 38.

“ And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen ; Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord : peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.”

SINCE the Presbyterian Church of Townsend-street was opened, by the Rev. Dr. M'Leod, of Glasgow, on the 26th of April, 1835, “the Psalms and Paraphrases” have been used, according to the discretion of the existing minister, in conducting the public worship of the sanctuary. For some months a most unprofitable controversy has been going on in our congregation, in relation to the use of Psalms and Hymns ; and on last Monday evening a memorial was presented to the Session by some members of the church, requesting “the disuse of Paraphrases and Hymns in the Congregation of Townsend-street, in the Sabbath Schools, and the Bible Classes connected therewith.” In relation to this memorial the resolution of the elders was—“That the Session decline to acquiesce in the prayer of the memorial, or to recommend any change in the manner of conducting the public worship of the Church.” In this finding of the eldership I most cordially concur. At the same time, recognizing the religious character of the memorialists, and the general desire after truth which pervades the membership of the church on both sides of this question, I have felt it my duty to address my mind more closely to the subject matter of our Psalmody, and to lay before you my views, as based on the Word of God and the history of the church. In doing so I shall take up the propositions, as they are stated by those who advocate the exclusive use of the Psalms in the worship of God.

The First Proposition is—“*That an All-wise Providence has, in and by an unrepented law, fixed and determined the subject and matter of praise to be the Psalms of David and of Asaph the seer, to the exclusion of every other.*”

This proposition is rested on 2nd Chronicles xxix. 30—“Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer.” Hezekiah seems to have had a great regard for the founders of his family, and ordered a collection of the Proverbs of Solomon as well as of the Psalms of David. We do not, however, mean to doubt the Divine guidance in giving this injunction ; and the simple question to be discussed is—Does this command of Hezekiah limit the Psalmody of the Church to “the Psalms of David and of Asaph the seer ?” In answer to this question we ask—Does the Book of Psalms contain only “the words of David and of Asaph the seer ?” Let us examine the book itself and we will find that so far from having been written exclu-

sively by "David and Asaph," for the Psalmody of the Church, it is a collection of Inspired Songs extending over a period of one thousand years, to which collection David was only the principal contributor. The Book of Psalms seems to embrace five collections, each of which ends with a Doxology. Part First—Consisting wholly of David's Psalms, and extending from the 1st to the close of the 41st. The Second—Consisting of Psalms by David, and by the sons of Korah, from the 42nd to the close of the 72nd. The Third—Consisting of Psalms by David, by Asaph the seer, and by some authors subsequent to the Babylonish captivity (see 85th Psalm), extending from the 73rd to the 89th. And the Fourth and Fifth—Commencing with the 90th Psalm by Moses, embracing several by David, others probably by Jeremiah, or by some inspired penmen, during the period of the Babylonian captivity, as the 79th, 102nd, 137th, and others, of which the authors are not known, written after the return from the captivity, for the worship of the second Temple, as the 126th. We have thus internal evidence that, whilst some of the Psalms were written 500 years before the days of David and Asaph, others were written fully 500 years after both, and about 130 years after the command of Hezekiah. It is thus clear that there are Psalms in the third, fourth, and fifth collections which could not be, by any possibility, embraced in the command of Hezekiah, not being written until a century after his death. The compilation of the Book of Psalms is generally ascribed to Ezra; and to the book, as thus compiled, we point as producing internal and irresistible evidence that the command of Hezekiah did not limit "the subject and matter of praise to the words of David and Asaph the seer, to the exclusion of every other." And the Book of Psalms, as we have it, and as thus embracing a much more extensive authorship, is sanctioned by Christ in Luke xxiv. 44. We take, then, the command of Hezekiah, *so far as it goes*; but that command will not sustain the extended and exclusive interpretation put upon it by the over-zealous admirers of "David and Asaph the seer." It will not, and does not, exclude all others. And suppose we grant that this command of Hezekiah was designed to limit the psalmody of the Church to the Psalms of David; which we deny, then we assert that in and by the compilation, as we have it, that law was repealed, and the repeal was sanctioned by Christ. We opened the exercises of this evening by singing the 126th and 90th Psalms, in which I observed that all our friends joined; and yet neither the one nor the other was written by David or by Asaph, and both must be excluded by their interpretation of the law of Hezekiah. I know our friends are not prepared thus to cast away the choicest gems in the Book of Psalms; and since they thus repudiate their own proposition, twice over this evening, I trust we shall hear no more about this "unrepealed law." Having thus cleared away the misconception, in relation to the command of Hezekiah, throughout the canon of Scripture, which extends over a period of one thousand years subsequent to the period of Hezekiah, I find *no* law by which an all-wise Providence has ever fixed the subject and matter of praise to be the Psalms of David, to the exclusion of every other; and I am determined "to stand fast in that liberty wherewith Christ has made us free."

The Second Proposition is—"That whilst many other inspired songs are found in the Scriptures, the Book of Psalms alone has been sung by the Church, and sanctioned by God, in public worship."

Is it a fact that no songs but those embodied in the Book of Psalms has ever been sung or sanctioned in the public worship of the Church? What saith the Scriptures? We turn to the book of Exodus, and in the 15th chapter and 1st verse we find the lofty and magnificent "song which Moses and the children of Israel sang unto the Lord." This song, which is typical of the triumphs of the Gospel Church, was, we believe, sung throughout the journeyings of the wilderness; and we are assured, in Revelations xv. 3, that it is sung by the redeemed in heaven, in conjunction with the song of the Lamb; and yet it has no place in the book of Psalms. In that same chapter of the book of Exodus, and 20th verse, we find the beautiful song which Miriam and the maidens of Israel sang to the Lord; but though sung and sanctioned, it has no place in the book of Psalms. In 2 Samuel i. 19, we find the song of the bow, "which David bade them teach the children of Judah;" and yet, though written in the words of David, and sung by his command, it is not found in the book of Psalms. In Isaiah xxvi. 1, we find a distinct prediction in relation to the psalmody of the Christian Church; but the Prophet does not say—"In that day shall they sing the Psalms of David, to the exclusion of every other;" but, "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city," &c. That inspired song forms the 20th Paraphrase. According to the opinion of our friends, we may read the song and rejoice in it, but not *sing* it! To comply with the prediction would be a violation of duty, and "unbecoming in the house of God" !!

Without losing time by dwelling on the absurdity of such logic, we go on to ask—Have we any trace of this prediction being fulfilled in the New Testament? Yes: the pages of New Testament Scripture are studded with the most beautiful and blessed effusions of inspired song. Such is the song of Mary, Luke i. 46, and the song of Zacharias, Luke i. 67, in which he hailed the coming of Christ as "the day-spring from on high." But we shall be told, these songs were not sung, at least in public worship. Yes; the substance of these songs, and, in fact, the words, were sung by the angels over the cradle of Christ in that heavenly anthem, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke ii. 14.) This song was sung and sanctioned, though it is not one of the Psalms of David. Yes; but the reply is—It was sung by *angels*, and not by the church. Even so, these angels are very good companions with whom to sing; and I hope our friends will yet love and enjoy their companionship a good deal more than they do just now. As Heaven's own messengers, they were not likely to use any but "warrantable subject and matter of praise to God."

But, passing on, may I request your close attention to the song described in our text as sung by the church, and sanctioned by the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and the Head of the church. In the 37th verse you find a description of the congregation and the worship—"The whole multitude of the *disciples* began to *praise God* with a loud voice." That surely is public worship. Now what did they sing? Why, in the 38th verse we have the song, and in that song the *first* part alone is borrowed from the Psalms of David—"Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord." But does the song cease with the words of David? No. Here is the second part, "Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." You will search in vain for that in the Psalms of David. It is the song predicted by Isaiah, chanted by the angels, in all probability led by the shepherds, but most certainly, sung by the disciples—aye, and

“by the whole multitude.” But was this song sanctioned by Christ? Surely we will find our blessed Saviour “fixing the subject and matter of praise to be the Psalms of David, to the exclusion of all other.” Alas for the exclusive theory of our friends! we find no law or limit of any such kind; but, on the contrary, when this song of the disciples was challenged by the Pharisees, and these objectors cried out, “Master, rebuke thy disciples,” so far from having any sympathy with them or their objection, he said—“I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.” Here, then, we have the model of our own congregational psalmody. We begin with the Psalms of David, and we close with the Psalms of the New Testament; and the man who says, that in singing the Psalms of David, and the songs of the New Testament, we do what is “unwarrantable and objectionable in the house of God,” as some of these memorialists say, must take his charge against Christ, who sanctioned thus the inspired songs of the New Testament, in addition to the Psalms of David.

We might close our argument here in conscious triumph, under the direct sanction of Christ; but we shall pass on to notice the accumulating testimony of *apostolic* times. In Ephesians v. 19, Paul describes the members of the Christian Church as “speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” In this and a similar passage in Colossians iii. 16, the Apostle lays particular stress on melody and grace in the heart—a point which, in this controversy, is, I fear, too frequently regarded as of minor importance to the language of the lip. I am quite aware that our friends try to evade the point in these passages as to the matter of praise, by referring the words of the Apostle to those poetical pieces of David, some of which are *Mismarim* or Psalms; others *Tehellim* or prayers; and others *Shurim*, or songs; just as in prayer, there is the one exercise in the various parts of adoration, confession, and supplication. But this exposition appears, under any circumstances, forced and unnatural, and more especially so when we find that in the previous Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Ep. xiv. chap. at the 26th verse), the Apostle, who is generally considered a high authority, recognizes the production of Psalms as one of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, poured out then on the church—which psalms were used when “the whole church came together into one place” (v. 23); and yet, instead of condemning this gift of psalmody as “unwarrantable and objectionable in the house of God,” he says, in the first verse of the chapter, “Desire spiritual gifts.”

That, besides the Psalms of David, hymns and spiritual songs were written, recognized, and sung by the Christian Church, is distinctly affirmed by Neander, whose testimony is—“The Apostle Paul exhorts the primitive churches to sing spiritual songs. For this purpose were used either the psalmody of the Old Testament, or *hymns composed expressly for this object*, especially hymns of praise and of thanks to God and to Christ.” And he adds this important advantage and effect of these hymns:—“In the controversies with the Unitarians (at the end of the second and beginning of the third centuries), *the hymns* were appealed to, in which from the earliest times, Christ had been worshipped as God.” Nay, more: I believe that traces of these very hymns are to be found in Paul’s pastoral Epistles, in which we find six quotations not taken from the Old Testament Scriptures, and five of which are introduced thus:—“This is a faithful saying.” Of these you will find one which has cheered many a depressed and dying sinner, in 1 Timothy i. 15: “Christ Jesus

came into the world to save sinners;" and the sixth is introduced in 1 Timothy iii. 16, with the preface, "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness;" and then comes the quotation—"God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Taking this as a specimen of an early Christian hymn, I, for one, cannot see how any Unitarian can get over the argument.

And if we proceed one step farther, and trace the history of the Church of the Millennium, as it is written by the inspired pen of John, and as it shall yet be actually developed on the earth, we find in Revelations v. 9, that the matter of praise is not restricted to the Psalms of David, but that "they sung a *new* song, saying—Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." And of this *new* song it is written in the 13th verse—"Every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Those who "fix the subject and matter of praise to be the Psalms of David, to the exclusion of every other," must surely be thankful that they do not live in those days of millennial glory. "Every creature on the earth" will then join in this *new* song, which they pronounce "unwarranted and objectionable;" and how they would act in the circumstances I leave themselves to answer. Still it is strange—passing strange—that in the face of such accumulating testimony from the Old Testament and the New—from our Lord and His Apostles—nay, even with this voice from heaven echoing in their ears, there are men who, in apparent ignorance of their Bible, affirm that "the Psalms of David alone were sung by the church, or sanctioned by God in public worship."

The Third Proposition is—"That to use or sing any song of human composition is unwarranted and unbecoming in the house of God."

In this controversy we frequently hear comparisons drawn between the Psalms and Paraphrases, as between collections of Divine and human composition. We can scarcely comprehend what our friends mean by the statement, "We cannot consistently sing any collection of human composition." The Psalms of David, and the other songs of the Old and New Testament, are equally inspired; but neither the metrical version of the one, nor the paraphrase of the other, can claim inspiration—both are "human compositions." We cannot understand how men of intelligence or education can claim "inspiration" for the metrical version of the Psalms. In the Epistle to the Galatians, the third chapter and 16th verse, the Apostle Paul hinges the argument in relation to the Messiahship of Christ on the single word "seed," and that in the singular number. Any change or liberty, then, with a single word of Scripture, is incompatible with the principle of verbal inspiration. But in the metrical version of the Psalms, frequent liberties are taken with the text for the sake of the measure, and rhyme, and thus the theory of inspiration is subverted. To take an example, in the very first line of the first Psalm, the word "perfect" is inserted for the sake of the measure, though that term has no place in the original, nor is it exactly in accordance with the standards of our church, which describe "perfect blessedness" as one of the benefits awaiting the believer subsequent to the resurrection.

There are many simple enough to believe and assert that the metrical version of the Psalms comes closer to the original than the authorized version; but to all such, we would suggest two very important points, in which, even as a translation, the metrical version differs from the authorized version. First—In the authorized version, when any liberty is taken with the text in order to bring out the sense, all such words are inserted in italics. Second—When any word bears a different reading, it is given in the margin. Apart altogether from the merits of the two translations, no such rules are recognized in the metrical version. This claim of inspiration, however, will be best met by a statement of the history of the metrical version, and of the opinions of its authors in the Westminster and Scottish Assemblies.

What then is the history of the metrical version of the Psalms and Paraphrases? It is impossible to enter fully into all the details of these versions; but we submit the following statement of the leading facts. The Psalms were arranged in metre in the time of Edward VI., 1556-1565, by Sternholde and Hopkins, and about that time this version was adopted by the Church of Scotland. It was largely circulated, but in some parts was so grotesque that a general desire was felt for its revision. A second version was made by James VI., who endeavoured to assimilate the forms of worship in Scotland and England. Having entrusted the most learned divines of the church with revising the English translation of the Bible, which was happily completed in 1611, he himself undertook to perfect a new version of the Psalms in metre, for general use, about 1631. This version, being bound up with a liturgy, had no general acceptance in Scotland. The third effort, and that which forms the basis of our present version, was made by Francis Rous, about 1643. Rous was a Cornwall gentleman, a member of Cromwell's Parliament, and a lay member of the Westminster Assembly. He was also a man of great learning and distinction. The Westminster Assembly, then sitting, was anxious to provide a uniform psalmody; and on this subject a long correspondence was carried on between the Houses of Parliament, the Westminster Assembly, and the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Considerable discussion arose as to the relative merits of the version of Rous and another published about the same time by Wm. Barton, who was a minister of Leicester. Barton's version was supported by the Lord Protector, the House of Lords, and the London clergy; but the version of Rous was strongly espoused by the Westminster divines, and was sent down to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland by Samuel Rutherford, George Gillespie, and G. Wynrame, who were the Scottish representatives in the Westminster Assembly. The General Assembly appointed a commissioner in 1647, to revise and amend the version of Rous; and on this commission the leading members were John Adamson, of Edinburgh University, Zachary Boyd, of Glasgow, David Leitch, of Aberdeenshire, and Robert Lowrie, of Edinburgh. After two years and a-half of labour, or "travel," as it is styled, during which several commissions reported, and the Presbyteries of the church were consulted, our present version was adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in 1648, including in it the Old Hundredth, by Sternholde and Hopkins; the 124th, 2nd version, by William Whittyngham, and the 148th Psalm, from King James's version. Was this metrical version of the psalms on which they had thus bestowed such "travel," regarded by those divines as out of the category of "human compositions?" So far from it, in all their correspondence

it is invariably styled—"the *paraphrase* of the psalms in metre." We give the following quotation from the act of the General Assembly, establishing and authorizing its use:—"The Commission of the General Assembly, having with great diligence considered the *paraphrase* of the psalms in metre, do approve the said *paraphrase* as it is now compiled, hereby authorizing the same to be the only *paraphrase* of the Psalms of David to be sung in the Church of Scotland, and discharging the Old *Paraphrase*, and any other than this new *paraphrase*, to be made use of in any congregation or family after the first day of May, 1650."

We are often told that the paraphrasing of the other songs of the Old and New Testament is the product of later, darker, and more degenerate days; but Baillie informs us that this same Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in their act of 28th August, 1647, for revising the paraphrase of the psalms, did "farther recommend that Mr. Zachary Boyd be at the pains to translate *the other Scriptural songs* in metre, and to report his 'travels' also to the Commission of the Assembly that, after their examination thereof, they may send the same to Presbyteries, to be there considered until the next General Assembly." And in 1650, we find the Commission of the Assembly thanking Mr. John Adamson, Mr. Zachary Boyd, and Mr. Robert Lowrie, "for their translation of the psalms *and other Scriptural songs* into metre." This section of the paraphrases seems to have made slow progress; for, "though the proposal of enlarging the psalmody, by joining the paraphrases of other passages of Scripture, was afterwards brought under the deliberation of the Assembly at various intervals in 1706-'7-'8, it was not until 1745 that the collection was published; and being remitted by the Assembly to the several Presbyteries, it came to be "used in churches, in public worship, where the minister finds it for edification." It is thus patent, that these giants of the Puritan age never dreamt of regarding the metrical version of the psalms as "inspired," or as anything but a "human composition;" nor did *they* ever consider the paraphrasing of the other songs of the Old and New Testament as either "unwarrantable or objectionable." These discoveries were left to be made in a more superficial age, when so many, especially of our young men, seem to have forgotten the inspired injunction of the Apostle James—"Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak." If, then, our friends are really in earnest, when they state that they "cannot consistently sing any collection of human composition," they must not only give up "the paraphrases," but they must also "refrain from singing" the metrical version of the psalms, and cultivate that higher class of music, which will enable them to chaunt the prose version, or, better still, the original Hebrew.

The fourth Proposition is—"Since we can all join in singing the Psalms, why not give up, for the sake of harmony, the use of the Paraphrases and Hymns, in the Congregation, the Sabbath Schools, and the Bible Classes."

I stand here publicly and distinctly to dissociate myself from all sympathy with those who have the presumption to affirm, that the "Psalms of David" are antiquated and unsuited for Christian worship. I have long learned to regard this book as one of the most beautiful and blessed portions of inspired truth; and I can say for myself, that I find its daily study most conducive to the devotion of the heart. Nay, more, I have no sympathy with those shallow critics who find fault with the versification of our psalms. I love its piety and its poetry; and I admire even the occasional ruggedness of its rhythms, and the severe simplicity of its ver-

sification. I am convinced, in common with Manton, Goodwin, and Poole, that besides that, "it runneth with such fluent sweetness," it cometh nearer to the original than any other of the metrical versions. At the same time, I am anxious to dissociate myself from all defence of nine-tenths of the trash which is printed, published, and sung under the designation of "hymns." Avoiding both extremes in the exclusive use of the psalms, and in the unlimited admission of hymns, I am not prepared to give up the use of "the paraphrases of the other songs of the Old and New Testament," in the Congregation, the Sabbath School, and the Bible Classes, any more than in private devotion. And why? I answer—

First—Because I wish my congregation and myself to enjoy the psalmody as well as the teaching of the New Testament. In this controversy we often hear of a perfect psalmody as provided for the church in the book of Psalms. We deny the assertion altogether; and against this opinion we place the inspired statement of Paul, who, in Hebrews xi. 40, affirms, of the Old Testament Church and worthies, that God "provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." In the Jewish Church there was nothing perfect—the sacrifice was not perfect, the temple was not perfect, the revelation was not perfect, the worship was not perfect, the psalmody was not perfect. To perfect the organization and worship of the Christian Church there was required the mission, incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, and the revelation of the New Testament. With this complete canon we meet the Jew, and affirm that the New Testament, as well as the Old, is, in all its parts, an authorized revelation; and, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." In this category praise forms an essential part; and if this New Testament be recognized by all to be profitable for *preaching* and for *prayer*—neither of which are limited to the Old Testament or the Psalms of David—how can any man, who believes in the inspiration of the New Testament, refuse to recognize it as profitable for *praise*? Shall we sing the prayers of David, and refuse to sing the prayers of David's Lord? Shall we sing the song of Asaph, and refuse to sing the songs of the angels? Shall we sing the musings of Moses, and reject the inspirations of Paul? Must we sing with the weeping captives of Babylon, and be shut out from singing with the beloved disciple of Patmos? Others may refuse with such consistency and comfort as they can, but "for me and my house," we are prepared and resolved to recognize the unrestricted inspiration of the whole word of God; and "with the whole multitude of the disciples," mentioned in our text, "to praise God" in the songs of the Old and New Testament, blending the two, as heretofore, after this inspired model in the worship of the Congregation, the Sabbath School, and the Class.

Secondly—Because I desire a psalmody better suited for the young and the unlearned. In "the psalms" there are many most exquisite gems of inspired poetry, exceedingly beautiful and simple, and adapted to all. Have we not the 23rd, which is childhood's own heritage, and the psalm in which the infant mind first learns to lisp the praise of God? Have we not the 40th, the 51st, and the 130th, in which many a broken-hearted penitent has learned, and loved to appreciate the provisions of redeeming love? And have we not the 103rd,

which stands pre-eminently out, as one of the most endearing delineations of the everlasting love of God the Father towards his adopted children? Far be it from us to forget or withhold such psalms as these, either from the territory of argument, or of use. In common with our friends, we glory in such a birthright of song; but we are not, after all, prepared to close our eyes, or the eyes of our friends, to the fact, that, in general, "the psalms" present truth in type and prophecy; and thus in a form more suited to the mind of the matured Christian, than to the capacities of those whose mind has not been matured either by age or education. Let us, then, retain the psalms for all who prefer them; but let us have an enlargement of this psalmody, by joining the paraphrases of other passages of Scripture, in which the truths of Christianity may be described and sung without either type or prophecy, in the simple matter-of-fact style and language of the New Testament. We have not time at present to amplify on this point; nor need we do more than give one illustration of our argument. There is no more delightful doctrine than that of the Resurrection of the Dead; and in the splendid argument of Paul, in the xv. chap. of 1 Corinthians, it is inseparably associated with the efficacy of the atonement. This doctrine is thus brought out by David in the 16th Psalm, v. 9, 10:—"My flesh also shall rest in hope; for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell: neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption;" and so far as I recollect, there is no other allusion to this doctrine in the Psalms except this, and that brought out in the 17th Psalm 15th verse:—"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." You will find this same doctrine as brought out with the increased clearness of the New Testament teaching, not only in the argument of Paul, but in that beautiful passage in 1 Peter i. 5:—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Now let us turn to the metrical paraphrase of these two passages, and without stopping to notice the serious liberty taken with the original text, by giving "*the grave*" as the resting-place of "*the soul*," we present both in parallel columns, and ask any unprejudiced mind to say in which is the doctrines of the resurrection presented in the form best suited to the capacities of the young.

PSALM XVI.

Because my soul in grave to dwell,
Shall not be left by thee;
Nor wilt thou give thine Holy One
Corruption to see.

PARAPHRASE LXI.

Blessed be the everlasting God,
The Father of our Lord;
Be his abounding mercy praised,
His majesty adored.
When from the dead He raised His Son,
And called Him to the sky,
He gave our souls a lively hope
That they should never die.
To an inheritance divine
He taught our hearts to rise,
'Tis uncorrupted, undefiled,
Unfading in the skies.
Saints by the power of God are kept
Till the salvation come:
We walk by faith as strangers here
But Christ shall call us home.

Thirdly—Because I wish to have the worship of the church on earth as like as possible to the worship of the church in heaven. In the book of Revelation we get a glimpse of the church in its glorified state. There is perfect happiness there, and that happiness finds expression in perfect and perpetual song. And what is the song sung in these blessed abodes of everlasting life and everlasting love? Is it “the Psalms of David and Asaph the seer, to the exclusion of every other?” Of any such limitation there is not the shadow of a conception amongst the saints in the upper sanctuary. The express declaration is—“They sung a *new* song;” and in the ascription of “blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever,” “Every creature which is in heaven” delights to join. As grace is the preparation for glory, so the worship of the church on earth is the preparation or the worship of the church in heaven; and I am utterly unable to understand how any Christian can refuse to sing below what he will rejoice to sing above. Some may refuse, acting under the influence of inveterate prejudice; but the time is not far distant when all these misconceptions will be cleared away from every mind; and standing on the sea of glass, the emancipated and glorified membership of the Old and New Testament Church shall everlastingly and universally unite in singing “the song of Moses and of the Lamb.”

N.B.—Might I suggest to our zealous friends to bestow a little of their disposable chivalry on that other “unrepealed law” of Hezekiah’s, which is contained in 2nd Chronicles 29th chapter and 25th verse—“And he (Hezekiah) 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.*”

DIVINE PSALMS

AGAINST

HUMAN PARAPHRASES AND HYMNS.

REVIEW OF A SERMON

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM JOHNSTON,

ON

“PSALMS AND PARAPHRASES,”

BY

THOMAS HOUSTON, D.D.

BELFAST:

GEORGE PHILLIPS AND SONS, BRIDGE STREET;
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NORTH-STREET; J. REED, VICTORIA-STREET; ALEX. S. MAYNE, DONEGALL
SQUARE EAST; AND S. GORDON, 54, DIVIS-STREET.

1861.

DIVINE PSALMS

AGAINST

HUMAN PARAPHRASES AND HYMNS.

To defend the truth, from whatever quarter it is assailed, is, at all times, a seasonable duty; and if this is done in a Christian spirit, the effect must ever be salutary. We are expressly commanded to "buy the truth and sell it not;" and if, with a supreme regard to the authority that enjoins the duty, our motto be, "Speaking the truth in love," we have no cause to be unduly concerned, even should our motives be misconstrued, and there appear a want of harmony of sentiment among those who, on the grand fundamental articles of the Christian faith are agreed.

Whatever may have been the occasion that led to the publication of this sermon on the "Psalms and Paraphrases," the author could not but be aware that he was assailing a principle which several distinguished ministers of his own communion, and numbers in other sections of the church—ministers and laity—regard as a precious part of the faith once delivered to the saints. He has, moreover, given such an exhibition of the arguments of those whose doctrine he attempts to refute as they are by no means prepared to admit is candid or satisfactory. The publication of the discourse must be considered as an open challenge to those whose sentiments it pretends to controvert; and no one has, therefore, any proper ground to complain, if it is subjected to an honest and fearless criticism.

I. INTRODUCTION.

A remark or two on the Introductory part of the sermon may not be out of place, before entering on the discussion of the matter contained in it.

1. If this sermon is published, as it was delivered to a large Christian congregation, on a Sabbath evening, then we cannot refrain from saying that it indicates rather a low style of sermonizing. The Apostles ever represent it as the minister's great work to exhibit Christ in the glory of His person, offices, and work, for the conviction and conversion of sinners, and the edification and comfort of believers. Judging this discourse by such a representation, it is singularly deficient in almost everything that constitutes the faithful preaching of the Word. We confess we are old-fashioned enough not to relish either the titles or matter of some of the popular pulpit "orations" of the day; and this sermon on the "Psalms and Paraphrases,"

whether considered in its title, introduction, conclusion, or principal arguments, is, in our judgment, little calculated to sustain the high character of the Presbyterian pulpit, in a time of religious inquiry and excitement. 2. The statement in the commencement, that since the opening of the Townsend-street Presbyterian Church, the psalms and paraphrases have been used "according to the discretion of the existing minister," in conducting the public worship of the sanctuary; and that for some months past "a most unprofitable controversy" has been going on in the congregation, "in relation to the use of psalms and hymns," while evincing Mr. Johnston's candour, does little credit to his judgment or fidelity. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in this country, has solemnly declared, by a judicial decision, that "The metrical version of the Psalms of David, used in Scotland, and by this church, is the ONLY psalmody authorized by the General Assembly."* How, after making such a profession, ministers and congregations of this body can consistently claim the right, and boast of the liberty, of introducing uninspired compositions into the church's psalmody, we are unable to determine. Either the Assembly's fundamental law was intended to be decisive in relation to the matter of the church's praise, and so to bind all its congregations and ministers, or it was meant to be of no obligation, and to leave parties at liberty to follow the bent of their own inclination and taste, in reference to the church's praise. Few candid persons, who consider the case, will, we are assured, adopt the latter view of the subject.

We have no acquaintance whatever with the parties who have lately agitated the question of psalmody in the Townsend-street congregation. We cannot, however, regard that as "a most unprofitable controversy" anywhere, which, if managed in a right spirit, aims to bring up a church to its own solemn profession, or to purge out human innovations and error from its worship. Those who have made, or who resolve to continue the innovation, are justly liable to the blame of schism, and not those who adhere to the fundamental basis of a profession, or who plead for Scriptural principle. The truth has certainly nothing to fear from discussion. To contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints is always a duty; and those who do so in any place, from a due regard to Divine authority, do good, not only in their own sphere, by exciting inquiry, and leading to search the Scriptures, but likewise throughout the church generally, by bringing up others to a Scriptural standard. It can never be useless, but is, on the contrary, very profitable, to contend for evangelical doctrine, and for purity of worship; and these, it will appear afterwards, are more intimately connected with the use or disuse of inspired psalmody than many imagine. On the subject of the matter of the church's praise, there have prevailed, for a length of time, much ignorance and misconception in Presbyterian and other churches. The ventilation of the question will, therefore, be beneficial. For our part, we rejoice in such an agitation. When, in connexion with the late religious awakening in this country, it became a matter of boasting, that vastly greater numbers of hymn-books were bought than of inspired psalm-books; and when numbers of Presbyterian ministers,

* Book of the Constitution and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, &c., published by authority of the General Assembly, p. 67.

in various places, took part in singing vapid, and, in some cases, erroneous hymns in the Union prayer-meetings, it was certainly high time that intelligent and pious men of the Presbyterian laity should take a stand, in behalf of the inspired songs of Zion. Such discussions will, we trust, go forward, till what our Presbyterian forefathers resolutely contended for shall have been fully attained; all unwarranted innovations are banished from the sanctuary; and the church, in its doctrine, worship, discipline, government, and the practice of its members, shall be fully conformed to the pattern shown on the Mount. 3. The reasons given for publishing this sermon, at the close of the introduction, deserve a brief notice. To us it does appear rather strange for a minister, moderating in a session, instead of giving reasons for a judicial decision, on which the parties aggrieved might avail themselves of their Presbyterian rights, and bring the matter before a higher ecclesiastical court, to carry the subject at once into the pulpit, where those who might dissent from the sentiments expressed would have no opportunity of reply. On such procedure we make no comment, as we have no wish to interfere. The author of the discourse, however, tells us that "the controversy" which he regrets, has had the effect of leading him to "a closer study of the subject of the church's psalmody;" and the result has been, that he has submitted to his congregation and the public "his views, as based on the *Word of God and the history of the church.*" So, then, after all, the controversy has not been "unprofitable," as this sermon on the "Psalms and Paraphrases" amply testifies! Who can tell, if the controversy continues, but that a still closer study of the Scriptures and ecclesiastical history may bring even Mr. Johnston to reject what Dr. Cooke expressively styles "namby-pamby" hymns, and to become an advocate for an exclusive inspired psalmody? Giving him all credit for sincerity in the profession he has made, we are compelled to say—judging simply from the meagre and inappropriate references to Scripture, and to ecclesiastical history, in this discourse—that the studies of the writer on this subject have been either very superficial or singularly barren. Of all that we have read in the shape of objections against the use of the inspired psalms, or in favour of hymns and paraphrases, we have found nothing so futile and inapplicable as this *brochure*. We would not have considered it worthy of a formal reply, but for the reason that we have already stated—the prevalence of much ignorance and misconception on the subject. The cause of inspired psalmody is assuredly very safe after this assault. That a production so weak and irrelevant should have emanated from a man of Mr. Johnston's acknowledged talent and standing, we can only ascribe to the circumstance, that he had a lurking feeling, that his case was indefensible; and that he was, to some extent, conscious that he was contending against a fundamental regulation of the supreme judicatory of his own church, and vindicating a practice which is directly opposed to the order of the church of God, under the Old Testament—to the worship, sanctioned by our Lord and His Apostles, and uniformly observed by the Primitive Christian Church, and followed by the Presbyterian Church in these lands, in her purest and best times.

II. MATTER OF THE DISCOURSE.

The author of this sermon, reasoning against the exclusive use of the Psalms of

David in the church's worship, presents in *four* propositions the arguments of the advocates of inspired Psalmody. On the representation thus given, we remark, that if Mr. Johnston meant—as the whole texture of the discourse would seem to imply—to convey the impression that these propositions contain anything like a fair or full statement of the argument in favour of an exclusive inspired psalmody, he is chargeable with a palpable misrepresentation. Whether he gives literally the words of the memorial presented to the session, or from what other quarter he extracted the propositions marked in inverted commas, we cannot say. But we can only ascribe to superficial acquaintance with the subject the exhibition he has given. We cannot bring ourselves willingly to think that he wished to present the reasoning of his opponents in the weakest light, that he might expose it to ridicule, or claim credit for refuting it in his slap-dash style of writing. The effect, however, has been to raise up a man of straw, and then to show his prowess by easily demolishing it. Had this author, before writing on the subject, carefully perused the works of Anderson, M^rMaster, Sommerville, or the “True Psalmody,” or even some of the pamphlets which have been lately issued in this country, in vindication of inspired psalmody, we feel persuaded from his candour, that he would have presented in a much stronger light than he has done the argument in behalf of employing only the Bible psalms in Divine worship. To say the least, it is short-sighted policy to present the reasoning of an opponent in a weak light, or to keep back its strongest positions. This may excite prejudice, or render the process of refutation apparently easy; but it can never subserve the interests of truth; and, in the end, it must recoil upon those who have recourse to a subterfuge of this kind.

FIRST PROPOSITION.

The first proposition, as stated by Mr. Johnston, is in these terms—“*That an all-wise Providence has, in and by an unrepealed law, fixed and determined the subject and matter of praise to be the Psalms of David and of Asaph the seer, to the exclusion of every other.*” This is given in the sermon as if it were a main or the chief argument of the advocates of an exclusive inspired psalmody, and reference is made to the ordinance of Hezekiah, contained in 2 Chronicles xxix. 30, enjoining the singing of praise to God, “in the words of David and Asaph the seer,” as if this were the only Scripture authority in favour of the practice for which they contend. Now, to this we reply, that though we hold that the matter of the church's praise has been prescribed by Divine appointment, and is to remain unaltered under every dispensation, we are not aware of any approved writer on this side of the question who has stated this in the terms of this proposition. To us it appears very like an *ad captandum* argument to say “the subject and matter of praise” is maintained to be the “Psalms of David and of Asaph the seer;” and then to labour to set aside this by showing, as Mr. Johnston has attempted to do, that some of the psalms in the inspired collection were composed after the time of Hezekiah. The writer, we apprehend, cannot but know that no intelligent advocate of inspired psalmody has ever pleaded that *only* the psalms penned by David and by Asaph the seer, are divinely proscribed as the matter of the church's praise, to the exclusion of every other part of the Book of Psalms. The expression, as used

in the ordinance of Hezekiah, was simply a designation or title, for the inspired psalms then in use in God's worship, as the Book of Psalms, or the Psalms of David came to be employed for this purpose when the collection was completed. All Mr. Johnston's parade of Biblical criticism on this point might well have been spared; as might also his flourish about the friends of inspired psalmody "repudiating" their own proposition, by singing portions of the Psalms which were penned after the days of Hezekiah, and his clearing away "the misconception" in relation to the command of Hezekiah. The misconception is wholly with the writer himself; and, if he has ever read anything that has been written on the other side, it is difficult indeed to conceive of it otherwise than as being wilful.

The place which the command of Hezekiah has in the plea for an exclusive inspired psalmody will be at once seen by a brief summary of the argument. We lay down as a fundamental principle that "the Book of Psalms," as the vehicle of the church's praise, has the seal of Divine appointment which no human hymns or paraphrases have. The Scriptural psalms were given by inspiration of God, and so are infallibly secured from error. They were given by God to be sung by the worshippers in His church, as they are singularly adapted to express the diversified matter of praise. None but inspired songs were used in the worship of the Old Testament Church. The Church of Christ being one under both Testaments—the Book of Psalms is no less adapted to the present state of the church than to her state when they were first written. The ordinance of their appointment has never been repealed. The exclusive use of the inspired psalms by our Lord and His apostles gives the highest sanction to their continued employment in the worship of the church, to the end of time. It may be added that the most beautiful human hymns can lay no claim whatever to inspiration—the best of them are chargeable with imperfection and are liable to error, and no Divine authority can possibly be pleaded for their use in the church's worship.

A pious clergyman of the Established Church, in conversation with the writer, some days ago, stated the question respecting the use of the psalms and of hymns, simply, but clearly. A lady, he said, had asked him what was the difference between psalms and hymns, as employed in worship, when he replied the one was DIVINE and the other HUMAN. It need not be told how vastly the one is to be preferred to the other; and among Presbyterians especially, whose illustrious forefathers contested unto blood against human inventions in God's worship, it might reasonably be expected there never would be a controversy on the subject.

Previously to the time of David, we have no evidence that the singing of God's praise formed a part of the stated worship of God. On particular occasions the people of God poured forth their grateful acknowledgments in songs of praise, some person inspired by the Holy Spirit furnishing a hymn suited to the occasion. There is not an instance on record in the history of the Bible, in which an individual presumed to undertake such a service without a divine call and the special inspiration of the Spirit. From the time of David, the public worship of the church was fully settled, and singing praise formed a regular part of it. David was inspired by the Spirit, and endued with all gifts necessary to qualify him for being "the sweet singer of Israel." In the sacred odes which he penned, we have a choice

variety of "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," suited to the diversified states of the believer and of the church, under every dispensation. Other psalms were afterwards added by other inspired penmen, just as other books were added to the Scriptures, until the collection of sacred songs was complete, and the canon of the Old Testament fully settled. In not a single instance, was anything inserted but by persons who were under the influence of the Spirit of inspiration, and who were thus supernaturally qualified for the service. The history of the Jewish Church after the time of David contains incontestible evidence that the inspired songs were exclusively used in the worship of God till the close of the dispensation. They were employed in the dedication of Solomon's temple. In the reformation under Hezekiah, when the temple was purified, and its worship, which had been neglected in the previous period of declension, was set up, the ordinance of praise, we are told was re-established, so that the divine songs penned by David, "the sweet Psalmist," and other inspired songs, were alone employed. It can never be shown that any thing was used in the matter of praise in the Old Testament Church but what was given by special divine inspiration, and what had a place in the collection of sacred songs which, when completed, was designed to form an inspired and perfect book of sacred hymns. The celebrated Jonathan Edwards justly observes, concerning the Psalms of David:—

"In these songs, David speaks of the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension into heaven, satisfaction and intercession of Christ; His prophetic, kingly, and priestly office; His glorious benefits in this life and that which is to come; His union with the Church; the blessedness of the Church in Him; the calling of the Gentiles; the future glory of the Church near the end of the world; and the coming of Christ to the final judgment." And again—"The Book of Psalms was used in the Church of Israel by God's appointment. This is manifest by the title of many of the psalms, in which they are inscribed to the chief musician: that is, to the man that was appointed to be the leader of divine songs in the temple, in the public worship of Israel."*

SECOND PROPOSITION.

The second proposition of the advocates of inspired psalmody, as given in this Sermon, is—"That, whilst many other inspired songs are found in the Scriptures, the Book of Psalms alone has been sung by the Church, and sanctioned by God, in public worship." To this statement, in substance, we do not object, though the terms employed are not the most accurate. Not one of the instances, however, quoted by Mr. Johnston in his attempt to refute this proposition, proves his own position,—that it is lawful or proper to use mere human compositions—hymns or paraphrases—in divine worship; or that, after the worship of the Old Testament Church was settled, any matter was employed in praise, save what was contained in the collection of sacred songs which were given for this purpose. The song of Moses at the Red Sea was specially inspired for a peculiar occasion, before the worship of the Israelitish Church was established; and we have not the slightest evidence, save Mr.

* Edwards's History of Redemption.

Johnston's assertion or belief, that it was sung by the Israelites during the wanderings in the wilderness. By the figurative expression, "the song of Moses and the Lamb," mentioned in the book of Revelation, which the redeemed are represented as singing in heaven, is clearly meant not the identical song sung at the Red Sea,—since this would require a corresponding *literal* "song of the Lamb," which even Mr. Johnston, much as he draws on fancy, will hardly venture to point out. The phrase plainly means, that the substance of the praises of the church triumphant will be the great matters of the spiritual songs of the church, both under the Old and New Testament, and that the ransomed of both dispensations will sing them in glory. Concerning "the song of the bow," referred to in 2nd Samuel i. 19, which David "bade them teach the children of Judah," there is no evidence whatever that it was ever used, or designed to be used, in public worship; it was to be *taught* the children of Judah, but it is not said that it was enjoined to be sung in worship. Can Mr. Johnston see no use in sacred, or even in inspired poetry, but its employment in the praises of the sanctuary? The patriotic song of Deborah—the elegy of David over Saul and Jonathan—the song of Moses, recorded in Deuteronomy xxxii.—and the thanksgiving hymns of Hannah and Mary, might serve the most valuable purposes, at the time, as their record in the volume of inspiration does still to all succeeding generations—though they were not inserted in the church's inspired canon of praise; and there is no evidence that they were ever employed in social worship. A writer who cannot see this distinction, can hardly be said to have applied his "mind closely to the subject of our psalmody," or to have taken his views either "from the Word of God, or from the history of the Christian Church."

The reference to Isaiah xxvi., as a distinct prediction of the psalmody of the Christian Church, and the argument that this song is contained in the 20th Paraphrase, and not in the Book of Psalms, though relied on by the author, as strong points, are weak and futile in the extreme. The Prophet's expressions do not mean that these words shall be literally sung, either on the return of the captives from Babylon, or in the praises of the New Testament Church; but that the matters contained in the prediction will form the subject of the Church's praise, in seasons of eminent deliverance. It were easy to show that these are embodied in different parts of the inspired psalms; and that, in singing them, we, in substance, sing "this song in the land of Judah," in a fuller sense, than if we used the words of the paraphrase referred to, which only dilute and mangle the beautiful predictions. If this song is to be literally sung in New Testament worship, then we require to have it in the words of inspiration, and not in a human comment, in which some of the principal ideas are weakened, and many of the leading thoughts and ideas are wholly omitted. And if it must be sung in the letter, then, too, it must be sung in the literal "land of Judah;" and this can only be by those Millenarians who believe in the personal reign, a literal resurrection of the saints at the commencement of the Millennium, and people of all countries going up to worship in the literal Jerusalem.

The "absurdity of logic," which Mr. Johnston charges upon the advocates of inspired psalmody, when they refuse to depart from the "Book of Psalms," in public praise, is found with himself, not with us. He has not shown, and he cannot show,

that "either the substance" or "the words" of the song, contained in Isaiah xxvi., are found in the songs of Mary or Zechariah, or of the angels, contained in Luke i. 46-67, and ii. 14; nor that these elevated effusions were employed, or intended to be employed, in the church's stated worship. It is expressly said by the evangelist, that Mary "*said*," and that Zecharias "*prophesied, saying*;" but neither in the one case or the other that they sung in praise. Even could this author show that these spiritual utterances were employed in social worship, it would not serve the cause of human psalmody, since these were spoken by Divine revelation, which cannot be affirmed of any of the hymns and paraphrases, which are brought in to supplement or supplant the sacred songs of Zion. Mr. Johnston surely need not be told that the Bible is intended to be a perfect directory for the worship of men upon earth, but not for the worship of the upper sanctuary; and that the praises of unerring angels, either in heaven or earth, are not set up as a full model to us.

The assertions made by the author of this sermon, about his text, or rather the motto—for text that cannot with propriety be called, which is neither illustrated, enforced, nor applied—are at once singular and extravagant. The jubilant strains uttered by the disciples and the multitude, (Luke xix. 37, 38), are asserted to be nowhere found in the Psalms of David—to be the song predicted in Isaiah xxvi.—"chaunted by the angels"—"in all probability led by the shepherds"—and to be "the standing model of our own congregational psalmody!" Was there ever such a mass of absurdity and folly declared in so many expressions? It is difficult to deal with such extravagant assertions, for they have no claim whatever to be regarded as arguments. The assembly convened—the extraordinary occasion—the acclaim of rapturous praise—and all the circumstances were so different from regular church meetings, that it is the height of extravagance to speak of the praises uttered as the "model of congregational psalmody." Then, if this has any meaning, it must purport, that, as Mr. Johnston declares nothing that was sung on this occasion is found in the Psalms, the Psalms of David are altogether excluded from the praises of his congregation. Instead of this, we suppose all that is yet attempted, is to place human hymns and paraphrases on a level with the songs of inspiration. It has often been said, that the tendency of introducing human hymns in the worship of the church, is to exclude altogether the Psalms of David, and certainly Mr. Johnston has only to conform his congregational praise to his fancied model, and then he will have reached this desirable consummation! The simplest reader of the Word can easily perceive that the record of the evangelist contains rather the chief heads of the praises uttered than the words of the song. Then Mr. Johnston must surely know that these matters are more fully expressed in various parts of the inspired psalms than in the chapter of Isaiah referred to, or in the angel's song. To talk of David's Psalms, and of the psalms of the New Testament, as "separate and distinct"—of our beginning with the one and ending with the other—and to sneer at the holders of the "exclusive theory," is mere puerility, and begging the question. It remains to be proved—which this writer has not attempted—that the inspired songs of the Old Testament were not designed for the same church under the New Testament, and that the authority that gave them at first has supplanted them. Then, where are the New Testament psalms, of which Mr. Johnston so

boastingly speaks? Are they found in the trashy paraphrases and hymns, which he and some other Presbyterian ministers are so fond of employing in Divine worship? Even with these, and the angels' "song," and the praises of the multitude at the Mount of Olives, and those of the seer of Patmos to boot, we would have a meagre and confused collection of New Testament songs. Even were we to grant that the jubilant praises uttered on the occasion of our Lord's entering into Jerusalem were designed to be a model for congregational psalmody, which we are far from doing, this would by no means sanction the use of mere human compositions, such as modern hymns and paraphrases, in the church's praise. The Spirit was poured out in an abundant effusion on an occasion which was designed to do special honour to Christ. The Apostles, inspired men, in all probability, led the way, and employed directly the words of inspired Scripture; and these, it may be, were taken from the book of Psalms, and were followed by the multitude who joined in with them. Wherein this has any resemblance to the use of paraphrases and mere human hymns, it remains for Mr. Johnston to show. For our part, we fully confess it transcends our powers. The shout of "conscious triumph" which the author of this discourse raises over the victory which he fancies he has achieved for the cause of human inventions in God's worship, is, to say the least, rather premature. "Let not him that girdeth on his armour boast himself, as he that putteth it off."

The testimony of "apostolic times," in favour of singing uninspired hymns in worship, as given by Mr. Johnston, is certainly rather meagre. It consists of a reference to the Ephesians v. 19, and Colossians iii. 16, often quoted in this controversy, and to the Apostle's expression, 1 Cor. xiv. 26, to a passage from the historian Neander, and to a singular flight of Mr. Johnston's fancy, in which he considers that the Apostle Paul refers to certain hymns different from the Psalms of David, that, according to him, were in use in the Primitive Christian Church. Into a discussion of the passages in Ephesians and Colossians, it is unnecessary to enter. It has been so often and so unanswerably shown that the titles "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs," apply to the Bible psalms, that it were a mere waste of words to offer proof on the subject. To a person even slightly conversant with the Hebrew Scriptures, the Septuagint, and other ancient versions, this is most apparent. Though Mr. Johnston oracularly pronounces such an exposition, "under any circumstances, forced and unnatural," we may fairly confront with his dictum, the sentiments of a number of the most distinguished divines and expositors. In an edition of Rouse's metrical version of the psalms, published in 1673, there is a preface signed by the celebrated Dr. Owen, and twenty-five others, some of whom were eminent scholars and ministers. They say—"To us David's Psalms seem plainly intended by these terms of *psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, which the apostle useth.*" (Ephesians v. 19; Col. iii. 16.)

Dr. Gill, a learned Calvinistic and Baptist divine, says, in the introduction to his commentary on the Psalms—"To these several names of this book, the Apostle manifestly refers in Ephes. v. 19, Col. iii. 16." Again, in his exposition of Ephesians, he affirms—"The hymns are only another name for the Book of Psalms; and by spiritual songs are meant the same Psalms of David, Asaph, &c." Dr. Doddridge, in his

note on Col. iii. 16, says that Calvin "thinks that all these words refer to David's poetical pieces."

MacKnight limits "the psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" mentioned by the Apostle, to those which were "recorded in the Scripture," and to such as were "dictated by the Spirit." To these testimonies may be added those of Brown, Horne, Durham, Daille, and Bloomfield, to the same effect. We set this array of distinguished witnesses over against Mr. Johnston's confident assertion, and ask whether that exposition of these passages is "forced and unnatural," which applies the titles, "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" to the Psalms of David?

The author himself sets aside the testimony which he attempts to bring forward from 1 Cor. xiv. 26—"Every one of you hath a psalm," &c., when he says "the Apostle recognises the production of psalms as one of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit poured out upon the church." These gifts were extraordinary and temporary, and no one pretends that they were continued in succeeding ages. Even Mr. Johnston will hardly venture to affirm that such gifts are conferred upon poetasters and hymn-makers of modern times. These extraordinary psalms were, even on his showing, inspired; and the practice referred to in the Corinthian Church, can furnish not the shadow of a warrant for the use of uninspired hymns or paraphrases in the worship of the church.

The quotation from *Neander*, given in the sermon, to prove that other pieces besides the inspired psalms were used in the worship of the Primitive Church, cannot be accepted for decisive evidence. The hymns in which Christ was worshipped as God, to which he refers, may have been the inspired psalms. In many of these the divine glory of the Saviour is clearly set forth; and some of them, as the second, forty-fifth, and hundred-and-tenth psalms, are expressly quoted by the Apostles in proof of our Lord's divinity. Dr. Killen, speaking of Pliny's letter to Trajan, written in A.D. 107, in which it is stated that the Christians met together before the rising of the sun, "to sing hymns to Christ as to a God," says—"It is highly probable that the 'hymns' here spoken of were the psalms of the Old Testament. Many of these inspired effusions celebrate the glories of Immanuel; and as, for obvious reasons, the Messianic psalms would be used more frequently than any others, it is not strange that the disciples are represented as assembling to sing praises to Christ."* *Neander*, in a subsequent part of his history, supplies evidence in opposition to the unsupported statement quoted in the sermon—"Besides the psalms," says he, "which had been used from the earliest times, and the short *doxologies* and *hymns*, consisting of verses from the Holy Scriptures, spiritual songs, composed by distinguished church teachers, were also introduced among the pieces used for public worship in the Western Church. To the last-named practice *much opposition*, it is true, was expressed. It was demanded that, in conformity with the *ancient usage*, nothing should be used in the music of public worship but what was taken from the *sacred Scriptures*. As sectaries and heretical parties had recourse to church psalmody to spread their own religious opinions, all those songs which had not been

* *Ancient Church*, p. 464.

for a long time in use in the church, were particularly liable to suspicion."* This refers to a comparatively late period, and yet, even then, the historian testifies that the use of human hymns, though written by "eminent teachers," was "strongly opposed," and "the ancient practice" was pleaded for,—namely, that nothing should be sung in the church's praise but what is "contained in the Scriptures." The fact is, the first hymn-makers, in the early times, were Gnostics and other heretics. Bardesanes, of Edessa, a Gnostic, is mentioned as having, in the second century, composed hymns for worship. He imitated David, that he might be adored and recommended by similar honours; and for this purpose he "composed 150 psalms."† Ancient testimonies are very full and explicit, showing that the Scriptural psalms were constantly used in the early church, while hymns were regarded with strong suspicion. Augustine says, speaking of his own times, in the early part of the fifth century—"The Donatists reproached the orthodox, because they sung with sobriety the divine songs of the prophets, while they (the Donatists) inflamed their minds with the poetic effusions of human genius." Cassian, of the fifth century, says—"The elders have not changed the ancient custom of singing *psalms*. The devotions are performed in the same order as formerly. The *hymns*—which it had been the custom to sing at the close of the night vigils, namely, the 50th, 62nd, 89th, 148th, psalms, &c.—are the same hymns which are sung at this day." Even as late as A.D. 561, 563, the Council of Braga forbid "the introduction of other poetry into the psalmody of the church beyond the songs of *canonical Scripture*."‡

That the Apostle Paul referred to *hymns* composed in apostolic times, in six instances, when he uses the formula, "This is a faithful saying," may be taken simply as a flight of Mr. Johnston's fancy. We are not aware of any expositor or Biblical critic having ever before hit upon so happy a conjecture. We suspect that few advocates of inspired psalmody are likely to receive with implicit faith Mr. Johnston's belief, so complacently avowed, as it is not at all probable that Unitarians will acknowledge the force of an argument which rests only on improbable and extravagant conjecture.

The reference to the worship of the Millennial Church, as opposed to the exclusive use of inspired psalmody, and the terms in which it is made, are characterized by similar extravagance and absurdity, as appear in former parts of this sermon. The memorialists before the Townsend-street Session, and other advocates of Divine songs, are pitied, when they are told they "should be thankful that they do not live in the days of Millennial glory," and when, "with the voice of heaven echoing in their ears," they, "in apparent ignorance of the Bible," are so obtuse as to plead for an exclusive inspired psalmody!! Whence, we may ask, all this dulness and stupidity, under the ministrations of such a pastor, and after his lucid expositions of the word? Forsooth, because at the millennial period of the church, saints and angels are represented, according to Mr. J., in Rev. v. 9—13, as singing a *new*

* Neanders General Church History, vol. ii., p. 318.

† Princeton Repertory, of 1820.—Article on the Sacred Poetry of the Early Christians, p. 530.

‡ These authorities are quoted from M^r Master's Apology for the Book of Psalms. pp. 441, 45, 65.

song, and every creature in heaven and earth swells the chorus, save the sticklers for David's Psalms! How sad must be their case, when they are denied a part in the glory and triumph of the millennial church! Thrice unhappy mortals! They are opposed to apostolic practice,—their eyes are closed to the superior illumination of the pastor of Townsend-street Church, when they do not at once adopt the practice which he so strenuously enforces—and they can have no part in the millennial glory! On the foolish and high-flown statements made in this part of the sermon, we may simply ask two questions—1. Where has Mr. Johnston any authority for applying the passage in Revelation v. to the millennial church at all? Of the numerous expositions of the Apocalypse, ancient and modern, that have been emitted, we know not one that has given such an application. It is surely fancy run wild to explain the opening vision of the book of the last times. Such violent wresting of Scripture, however, need not surprise us, by those who would displace the songs of inspiration by the hasty effusions of modern hymn-makers. 2. Has Mr. Johnston never found mention made of the church singing a *new song*, in the words of the inspired psalms themselves? Nothing but ignorance, or inveterate prejudice, could lead any one to overlook the idea that *the singing of a new song* is connected with new deliverances wrought—new mercies received—and elevated spiritual emotions; or to perceive that many portions of the Psalms of David, given as they were by the Spirit who knows the end from the beginning, are eminently adapted to the praise of the millennial church. Such are the 18th, 21st, 24th, 45th, 68th, 72rd, 98th, and the concluding psalms of the collection. When Christ's cause shall gloriously triumph in the earth, and He shall have taken to Him His great power to reign, we will not need, as some Millenarians allege, a new Bible. So neither will we need to lay aside a divine book of psalms, and adopt one merely human, since nothing will be so appropriate to celebrate the Church's glorious triumph as the words of the sweet psalmist of Israel.

THIRD PROPOSITION.

The third proposition which is controverted in this sermon is stated in these terms, ‘*That to use or sing any song of human composition is unwarranted, and unbecoming in the house of God.*’ This is rather loosely expressed, whether by Mr. Johnston or the memorialists we pretend not to say. This is taken advantage of in commenting on the statement, by a quibble at once silly and disingenuous. What the advocates for the Psalms of David plead for is, simply, that nothing but songs given by inspiration, *for the purpose of praise*, should be used in God's worship; and that it is unwarranted and presumptuous to sing in praise pieces of mere human composition. They are not so ignorant as to think that inspired thoughts and words may not be conveyed in human language. Mr. Johnston, it is presumed, will not deny that his people have the inspired Scriptures, though they are obliged to use them in a translation. To object, as he has done, that a faithful metrical version of the psalms is only a *human composition*; and, therefore, that to use it, is to give up the plea for an exclusive inspired psalmody, is simply to assume a position that deprives the church of God at large, of His Word as the ground of faith, except those of her members who may be learned in the original tongues in

which the Scriptures were first written.* If we cannot *sing* in a translation matter that was intended to be sung in the original, neither can we *read* it; and thus, on the ground assumed by Mr. Johnston, all who do not know Hebrew and Greek, are deprived of inspired Scripture. What we contend for in a metrical version of the psalms, to be used in the church's worship, is, that it should express the utterances of inspiration, as near as possible, without addition or dilution. We do not maintain that our venerable Scottish version is perfect, though as a close translation and transcript of the original, it is vastly superior to any other metrical version of the psalms, with which we are acquainted. We wholly refuse to admit that such hymns as "*Watts's Imitation*," which Romaine of the Church of England characteristically styles "*Watts's Jingle*," or such vapid compositions as the "*Paraphrases*," have any pretensions to be regarded as translations, or faithful copies of inspired songs. They are mere human compositions brought in to supplant Divine songs, and as we shall afterwards show, compositions comparatively of a low character, whether as it respects poetry or doctrine. Some of the most distinguished divines and scholars have declared the Scottish metre version to be an accurate rendering of the original, and to be eminently fitted for the purpose of public praise. Thus *Dr. Owen, Manton, Poole, and twenty-three others*, say—"The translation (Rouse's) which is now put in thy hand, cometh nearest to the original of any that we have seen, and runneth with such a fluent sweetness, that we thought fit to recommend it for thy Christian acceptance; some of us having used it already, with great comfort and satisfaction."

Boswell, the biographer of Dr. Johnson, says — "After looking at various metrical versions of the psalms, I am well satisfied that the version used in Scotland, is, upon the whole, the best, and that it is *in vain to think of having a better*. It has, in general, a simplicity, and unction of sacred poesy; and in many parts its transfusion is admirable." Two additional testimonies of a more recent date may be given. The late devoted *M. Cheyne*, whose attainments as a scholar, equally as his piety, were of a higher order, says—"The metrical version of the psalms should be read or sung through, at least once in the year. It is truly an admirable translation from the Hebrew, and is frequently more correct than the prose version." *Sir Walter Scott* declares—"The expression of the old metrical translation, though homely, is plain, forcible, and intelligible, and very often possesses a rude sort of majesty, which, perhaps, would be ill-exchanged for mere elegance. I have an old-fashioned taste in sacred as well as profane poetry. I cannot help preferring even *Strenhold and Hopkins* to *Tate and Brady*, and our own metrical version of the psalms to both."

The judgment of these distinguished men may be taken as more than sufficient to show the fidelity of the Scottish metrical version, in opposition to the allegations of the Rev. William Johnston. His *two rules* for distinguishing the prose from the metrical translation of the psalms, loosely and inaccurately as

* See *Sommerville* on "*The Exclusive Claims of David's Psalms*." Append. p. 155.

they are expressed, are, to say the least, irrelevant, as his criticism about the word "perfect," in the first verse of the first psalm in metre, betrays at once ignorance of the original, and oversight of other Scriptural statements. The Hebrew phrase in the first psalm might be literally rendered—"O, the blessednesses of the man, &c.," and the translation in the metre brings out the sense even more fully than in the prose. Mr. Johnston need not surely be told that the Scriptures assert, that "he that believeth *hath* everlasting life;" or, that saints, such as Noah, are represented as "perfect" here; or, that justified persons are "blessed" even now, "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus;"—they are perfect in kind now, though not in degree.

HISTORY OF THE PSALMS IN METRE AND PARAPHRASES.

The history of the Scottish metrical version of the psalms and of the Paraphrases, given in the sermon, will not go far to establish the reputation of the Rev. Wm. Johnston as a historian, any more than his remarks and arguments, to which we have already referred, will prove his knowledge as a Biblical critic, or his fairness and ability as a controversialist. Overlooking various omissions and misstatements in the sketch of the history of the Scottish version, we should like to know where Mr. Johnston has found the name of *G. Wynrame* in the list of the Scottish Commissioners to the Westminster Assembly. Passing this, however, we accuse the author of this sermon of a dishonest representation, when he labours to show that the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland that sanctioned our Scottish version, regarded it as nothing more than a mere human composition—when he tries to show that they sought to introduce poetical translations of other portions of Scripture, besides the Psalms of David, into public worship—and that the present collection of paraphrases and hymns, which Mr. Johnston employs in public praise, is the faithful carrying out of the purpose of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, entertained some 120 or 130 years before, in the reforming times. These statements appear at first sight plausible, and would seem to justify the position of the writer; but they want one essential element of true history—they are not founded on fact. There is in them throughout a *suppressio veri*,—and we need not inform Mr. Johnston to what this is tantamount. Because, forsooth, the word *paraphrase* is applied, in the act of the Commission, to the revised and amended version of Rouse; it is, therefore, to be regarded as on a level with such hymns and paraphrases as are brought in in later times! Mr. Johnston ought to know that words vary in their shades of meaning in the lapse of time. The word "paraphrase," as applied to Rouse's metrical translation, simply meant at the time *version*, and this is quite different from a paraphrase, in its modern and usual acceptation. When we speak of ancient versions of the Scriptures, such as the Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate, we mean translations, and this is altogether different from paraphrases, in which the sense of the original is diluted, expanded, or commented upon. Mr. Johnston would prove something to the point, if he could show that either before or after the adoption of our Scottish version, paraphrases of other Scriptural songs were employed by authority in the purest times of the

Presbyterian Church of Scotland: but this he is wholly unable to do. The fact that no such innovation ever took place in the days of Knox or Henderson, or during the times of persecution, and that it was only brought in when the Church of Scotland had declined from the truth, from purity in discipline and worship, is proof sufficient to show that our Presbyterian and Covenanted forefathers regarded the use of hymns and paraphrases in divine worship as wholly unwarrantable and objectionable.

THE PARAPHRASES.

It was certainly wise in Mr. Johnston to say little in his sermon either about the history of the introduction of the "Paraphrases" or their character; but whether this was accordant with historical fidelity is quite a different question. As the paraphrases are, in general, the favourite church songs of those Presbyterian ministers who contend against the exclusive use of the Psalms of David,—as these have been highly belauded,—and as, to a large extent, the Presbyterian laity are ignorant either of the history or character of these human hymns, we deem it proper to supply Mr. Johnston's historical omissions, and give some account of a Collection which has been considered worthy to be placed side by side with the inspired psalms, and, in many cases, almost to supplant them. The importance of the matter will plead our excuse for the fulness of details.

In general, we have no hesitation in saying that the paraphrases to which we refer are among the worst collections that have been introduced to supplement or supplant the sacred songs of Zion. They are, in many instances, tame and vapid, and destitute of poetic expression; while a number of them are devoid of evangelica sentiment, and are characterized by error in doctrine. Were we required to make a choice in relation to pieces of poetry of mere human authorship, to be used in the church's praise, we would greatly prefer many of those composed by Newton, Cowper, Montgomery, and Charles Wesley, to the most admired of the paraphrases. There is, however, with us no choice on the subject. Returning to the history, it deserves to be remarked, that, in the historical sketch about the paraphrases, given in the sermon, the author passes over a period of nearly 100 years, from 1647 to 1745. This is rather an ominous silence. Would Mr. Johnston show that, during all this time, human hymns were sung in connexion with the inspired psalms in the worship of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland and this country, it would relieve the blank, but this he is utterly unable to do—a proof, we should think, sufficiently plain that the innovation of man-made songs had not entered, to corrupt the worship of the Presbyterian Church in these countries. We now state briefly the movements that led to the introduction of the paraphrases in Presbyterian worship.*

"On the 13th May, 1742, at a time when Principal Robertson was at the height of his power, and Moderate counsels prevailed, and forced settlements and *riding committees* were in vogue, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland appointed a 'committee of ministers in and about Edinburgh, to make a *collection of translations* into English verse or metro, of passages of the Holy Scriptures, or receive

* The sketch that follows is taken from the *Covenanter*, (vol. II. p. 7), by the author. The writer is indebted for a number of the details given in the text to an able article on the History and Character of the Paraphrases that appeared some years ago in the *Free Church Magazine*.

in performance, of that kind from any that shall translate them.' After considerable delay, in 1751, the collection was sanctioned by the Assembly, expressly for the use of 'private families.' From the complexion of the Assembly, that had, shortly before, refused to condemn the Socinian errors of Professors Campbell and Simpson, had condemned the doctrines of grace as declared in the 'Marrow of Modern Divinity,' and had used such tyrannical and oppressive measures towards the Erskines, Gillespie, and others, we can readily infer that zeal for evangelical truth was anything but the principal object that led to the bringing in of these paraphrases and translations. It deserves to be noted, that it was when error had come in like a flood, and all Presbyterian rights were trampled under foot, that the attempt was made to get rid of the inspired psalms, and to employ instead, hymns of human composition. Yet the attempt was at first partial and cautious. The collection was sanctioned in 1751, only for 'the use of private families;' and, though many of the paraphrases were tame and vapid in expression, they were much less characterized by erroneous sentiment than those which were afterwards adopted, and which are at present printed and bound together with our Bibles. The progress of error in the Church of Scotland at this period was rapid. There is abundant evidence that the sole cause of the translations and paraphrases of 1751 being cast aside, and another collection substituted, was, that the 'sound doctrine' contained in many of them could no longer be borne by those who guided the counsels of the church. The paraphrases, instead of being confined to the use of private families, had, through various parts of Scotland, come to be employed in public worship; and, in 1775, the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr overtured the General Assembly to take steps for introducing them in public worship generally. The time was favourable for innovation, and for bringing in further corruptions in worship. Moderatism was in the zenith of its power, and through its malign influence, and the general decay of evangelical religion that then characterized the British churches, the nation was, generally, sunk in the slumbers of spiritual death. Instead of sanctioning for general use the collection of 1751, the Assembly placed the matter in the hands of a Committee, to 'revise and enlarge' the translations and paraphrases. This Committee reported on the 16th of May, 1781, and on the 1st of June, their report was considered and approved, and the 'Paraphrases' now in use received the sanction of the General Assembly.

"The differences between the old paraphrases, and the revised collection may be briefly stated. The former contained in all *forty-five* pieces, the whole of which are *professedly* retained in the new collection. *Twenty-two* have been superadded, making in all *sixty-seven*, exclusive of the hymns. These additional paraphrases stand in the order of the present collection, as follows:—No. 8, 9—12, 14—17, 19, 21, 27—31, 35, 44, 53, 58, 62. The respective authors of these were Rev. John Logan, Dr. Morrison, Rev. William Cameron, Drs. Martin, Blacklock, and Ogilvie, and Rev. Robert Blair, and some of them were altered from Watts. Among these twenty-two and the five hymns, are found many sentiments and expressions that are very objectionable. A writer in the *Free Church Magazine* * says of them— "They are, with scarcely an exception, devoid throughout of reason, unction, and spirituality, while they abound with heathenish images, dubious expressions, and often positive error." "Let them be examined by the light of God's word, and let the careful student perusing them all, say how much the twenty-two contain of matters really pertaining to godly edifying." This estimate we are quite persuaded is just. A low Arminianism, and even worse doctrinal error, with the total absence of distinguishing evangelical sentiment, pervade them throughout; and the only wonder is, that any minister or people having a regard to the blessed truths of the gospel, should ever have thought of employing them in solemn worship. The other *forty-five*, which appeared in the collection of 1751, are, in the new collection, diluted and emasculated; and they are altered often, to

* No. for April, 1847.

the sacrifice of poetic imagery and diction, so as deliberately to exclude from them several of the precious truths of the Gospel.

A few words respecting the writers of the additional paraphrases and hymns, and the revisers of the others, may not be out of place. Logan was the chief in this matter, and Cameron and Morrison his accomplices. Logan, whose parents were Seceders, early connected himself with the Established Church, and through the influence of Dr. Blair and others, became the Minister of South Leith. His was a forced settlement. While here, he composed and published the tragedy of 'Runnamede,' which was acted in the Edinburgh theatre, and which is full of oaths, and profane allusions; and, as a literary production, is contemptible. This circumstance, and Logan's low habits, raised against him such a ferment among his parishioners, that he was obliged to demit his charge. Through the culpable leniency of the church courts, he obtained a retiring allowance, and removed to London, where he died in 1788, at the early age of forty-five. The posthumous volume of sermons which bears his name, first issued by his executor, the celebrated Dr. Robertson, is, in the greatest part, plagiarized from others; while it is believed that almost all in his poetical writings that has any pretensions to poetry, was from the pen of his fellow-student—the lamented Michael Bruce—whose manuscripts he became possessed of, and refused to return, notwithstanding the entreaties of his relatives. Several of the best of the paraphrases which bear Logan's name, are now known to have been written or revised by Bruce, and from the "Gospel Sonnets," which the youthful student wrote and left in manuscript, the unprincipled plagiarist, appropriated whatever suited his object, and altered and destroyed much that was not at all suited to his taste—the breathings of a pious soul after God. The second paraphrase in the present collection, beginning—"O God of Bethel," &c., which is altered from the 44th in the collection of 1751, was given in Logan's Poems, published in 1781, with some slight verbal alterations, and yet it was written before Logan was born! Mackelvie, in his Life of Bruce, has given a number of the best verses, in the 8th, 11th, and 18th Paraphrases, as having been unquestionably written by Bruce, and yet they are uniformly ascribed to Logan. Cameron, who wrote the continuation of "Beattie's Minstrel," and who is known as the author of a volume of poems, published after his death, is the reputed writer of two of the paraphrases, the 14th and 17th, and he changed and mutilated several of the former collection. His own poems are, in many places, pointless, and without poetical merit, and the diction, in some instances, is such as to provoke, irresistibly, a laugh for its bathos and absurdity. Such a writer was a fit coadjutor in the work of expunging evangelical truth from the hymns of the church, and of corrupting the ordinance of praise.

Of the other writers concerned in the manufacture of the new paraphrases, we refrain at present from any particular reference.

This collection, as it now stands, was made in accordance with a settled and deliberate purpose, to leave out evangelical doctrine, and instead, to introduce vapid and unmeaning expressions, which may be suited to the religion of nature, but have no connection with the Gospel system. Comparing the paraphrases of 1751 with the present collection, we find in the former, a freedom from heathenish and unscriptural allusions, while the doctrines of Christ's eternal Sonship—his substitutionary work—particular redemption, &c., are clearly stated; in the present collection, these fundamental truths are carefully excluded, and images are brought in, wholly unfitted for Christian sacred poetry. Thus, the 13th paraphrase (on Prov. viii.), is so altered from the 30th of the old collection, that all reference to the Saviour, as the personal wisdom of God is left out, and throughout Eternal wisdom is represented simply as an attribute of the Almighty. The second verse, which stood in the old collection—

"I was the Almighty's chief delight
His everlasting Son,"

is changed into

“ I was the Almighty's chief delight,
From everlasting days;”

and, in a subsequent verse, the lines—

“ My thoughts, from everlasting day
On their salvation ran,”

are altered

“ Them from the first of days I loved,
Unchanged, I love them still,” &c.;

thus evidently excluding the doctrine of man's salvation originating in God's eternal love.

The paraphrase, No. xli., in the present collection, is a thorough specimen of this process of mutilation. It is altered from the former collection, so as to weaken or exclude the resemblance of the type to the Antitype, and there are expressions used which are untrue, and erroneous, as in verse 4 and 5, while the grand design of Christ's manifestation in the flesh is not stated, as it had been before. It were easy to multiply examples of this same vitiating process carried through almost every part of the collection. Gross and grievous ignorance of the Gospel plan of salvation appears to have characterized the writers and revisers of the paraphrases; while it is impossible to acquit some of them, and likewise those who adopted them of decided hostility to several of its fundamental doctrines. For the sake of euphony and grace in the rhyme, which is yet far from being always attained by those profane versifiers, truth is sacrificed, and, in some instances, common sense is outraged. Without proceeding farther at present, in this exposure, we adopt, in conclusion, the language of the writer, to whom we willingly acknowledge our obligation for most of the facts recorded in this paper:—

“ Neither of the two sets (the old and the new paraphrases) professes to be a collection of *translations*. The old is partly paraphrastic—partly a translation; the new is neither the one nor the other. It scarcely ever gives a pure translation of any portion of God's word, and as seldom does it, even for a few lines, give a faithful exposition or amplification of it. The collection is unquestionably not a collection of translations, nor is it honest paraphrase, but a nondescript mass of poetic verbiage, strung together designedly to suit a purpose, not only tinged, but deeply dyed with rankest Socinianism and Rationalism.”

If such is the character of the “Paraphrases,” it is surely high time that Presbyterian ministers should acknowledge their sin in having used them in the worship of God, and should at once abandon them for ever; and it is time too that the people should everywhere stand up to testify in behalf of the purity of God's worship.

Our remaining space will not allow us to enter into an analysis of the Paraphrases—a labour which we purpose to attempt, should we be called to write again on this controversy. Meanwhile, we may only observe—1. That it seems rather strange to plead for the paraphrases as being needed, that the songs of the New Testament may be taken with those of the Old, in Christian worship, since more than one half of the whole collection are on Old Testament passages. 2. Again, the paraphrases have no pretension to be translations of the passages on which they are founded. They are full of omissions and human additions, and are, in general, of the nature of comments, and these, in many cases, badly executed, and such as have no claim to be accepted as accurate or faithful. 3. They are, in a great measure, destitute

of poetic conception and expression. The best of them can bear no comparison with many of the sublime and beautiful passages of the Scottish metrical psalms. 4. Several passages in these paraphrases teach positive error.

In Paraphrase xv., it is said—

“For while the lamp holds on to burn,
The greatest sinner may return.”

And yet the Scripture tells us of some that, in this life, have committed the “*unpardonable sin*,” and of some, in Hebrews vi., that have so sinned that “it is impossible to renew them to repentance.”

Again, in Paraphrase xxxv., universal redemption is taught, when it is said—

“My broken body thus I give
For you—*for all*—take, eat, and live.”

In the words of our Saviour at the institution of the Last Supper, there is no such declaration that his body was broken *for all*.

In Paraphrase 51st, a doctrine akin to the transmigration of souls seems to be taught in the verse—

“We know that, when the soul unclothed
Shall from this body fly,
'Twill animate a purer frame
With life that cannot die.”

Neither the Apostle nor the Paraphrase is here speaking of the resurrection, but of what takes place immediately after the soul of the believer leaves the body at death. Where we are taught in the word, that at death, as soon as the souls of saints leave their bodies, they go to “animate purer frames,” we leave the admirers of the paraphrases to declare.

In the same paraphrase it is said, in the last stanza—

“Impartial retributions then
Our different lives await;
Our present actions, good or bad,
Shall fix our future fate.”

Passing over the unsuitableness of using the heathen word *fate*, in a song for Christian worship, we remark that it is not true that our *present good actions* shall fix our future happy condition. The bad actions of the unregenerate will be the ground of their final condemnation; but the reward to the righteous is wholly of *grace*, and conferred solely through the merits of the Redeemer. These may suffice for the present, as instances of the errors with which the paraphrases abound. On a future occasion, we may show more fully their heterodoxy.

FOURTH PROPOSITION.

The fourth and last proposition, to which a reply is offered, in this sermon, is given in these terms—“*Since we can all join in singing the Psalms, why not give up, for the sake of harmony, the use of Paraphrases and Hymns, in the congregation, the Sabbath-Schools, and the Bible Classes.*” We can only afford, at present, to bestow a brief and cursory notice upon Mr. Johnston's reasons for non-compliance with a demand so modestly expressed, to give up the use of paraphrases and hymns, and

to abide by an inspired psalmody, in order to secure harmony and prevent division in the church. He prefers strife and division, rather than relinquish man-made hymns; and to wound the consciences of those who feel that they are pleading for an important Divine ordinance, and who refuse to admit of human inventions and additions in God's worship; and he congratulates himself that he steers a middle course, "avoiding extremes in the exclusive use of the psalms, and in the unlimited admission of hymns." We might ask—if the inspired canon of praise is departed from—who shall set limits to hymn-singing? If the paraphrases please Mr. Johnston, another may plead for hymns of a different complexion; and revival hymns of all sorts, and others containing all shades of sectarian error, will speedily come in, to thrust out altogether God's own song of praise.

The reasons for refusing the request contained in the proposition are—1. That the author of the sermon and his congregation may "enjoy the psalmody as well as the teaching of the New Testament." This it is attempted to sustain, by alleging that a perfect psalmody for the church is not provided in the Book of Psalms—that as all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, every part of it must be profitable for praise as well as for preaching and prayer, &c. The proper answer here is, that the psalms were given of God, as the matter of the church's praise, and were sung both in the Old and the New Testament Church, with Divine sanction. It is mere assumption and unlicensed fancy to allege, that the praise of the church required to be perfected by the introduction of additional hymns. Mr. Johnston would require to show that the other songs, besides the psalms, contained in either the Old or New Testament, were given *for the purpose of being sung* in the permanent worship of the church. This he has not shown, and cannot show. Besides, we ask, where is the limit of the indefinite system? If one set of human hymns be refused, why admit another? If some parts of New Testament Scripture are to be paraphrased and sung, who shall say what are to be taken, or what left? And, again, whether is it to be the sacred songs, as they are contained in Scripture, or these altered, and commented on—expanded, diluted, misapplied, and perverted, as they are in the Paraphrases? Till these questions be properly answered, we submit that Mr. Johnston, in refusing a Divine basis of harmony and peace, and pleading for the use of the Paraphrases is claiming, as a privilege for him and his house, something vague, uncertain, and indefinite, on which he can never hope to attain Scriptural and comfortable fellowship in the church. It has been convincingly shown, that prayer and preaching are, in various respects, essentially different from praise. While we have the liberty of using our own expressions, under the guidance of the Word and Spirit in the one, we have a fixed inspired model for the other, from which we have no warrant to deviate. In relation to prayer, there is an express authoritative command—"After this manner pray ye." There is none such given respecting praise,—the reason being, that the canon of praise is complete and perfect. We have a book of inspired psalms for permanent use in the church—sufficient for all times and circumstances; and it is only presumption and folly, to propose to amend or set it aside, by the effusions of men who profanely meddle with God's words. As Mr. Johnston has not, however, thought fit to enter at length on this objection, pre-

bably feeling that it was not tenable, we do not deem it necessary to offer a fuller reply.

2. It is alleged, that the inspired psalms are "unsuited to the young and the unlearned." If this is so, were they not equally unfit for such persons, when God gave them at first to the Church? It is simply not a fact, that the Psalms of David "present truth in type and prophecy" more than other parts of Old Testament Scripture, and than some portions even of the New Testament. On the principle of this reason, these parts of the Word are unsuited to the young and the unlearned, and ought not to be read or be employed as the subject of instruction. The truth, however, is—the inspired psalms are among the most attractive portions of the Bible for the young. Under proper religious training, they have been imprinted from an early period on the hearts of the children of the church, and their early acquaintance with them has been signally blessed to them afterwards, in life and death. So it has been, too, with many unlearned peasants, in past ages, as it is still in the psalm-singing churches. Neither the children of the Jews, of the Apostolic church, of the Waldenses, of the French, Swiss, and Dutch Reformed Churches, nor their poorer members, were deficient in religious knowledge. Yet these were all intimately acquainted with the psalms of the Bible, and among them they were constantly employed in the devotions of the family and the sanctuary.

The illustration which Mr. Johnston gives on this topic, contrasting a verse of Psalm xvi. and the 61st Paraphrase, to show that the latter presents the doctrine of the *resurrection* in a form better suited to the capacities of the young than the psalm, is for this author singularly unhappy, since, in the psalm, the resurrection of Christ and his people is briefly but clearly stated; whereas, neither in the passage in 1 Peter i. 5, nor in the paraphrase may "the resurrection of the saints' bodies" be referred to at all. The Apostle is clearly speaking of the regeneration of believers, and their future felicity in glory, through the power of Christ's resurrection; and though this may be taken to include the resurrection of their bodies, he does not distinctly teach here, as is done in other parts of the Word, the resurrection of the saints. The paraphrase, besides in several expressions diluting and weakening the inspired thoughts, can scarcely be considered as at all teaching the doctrine of the resurrection, since all that is expressed in it may be applied to the happy immortality of the souls of believers. Mr. Johnston could never have selected such an example, or thought of presenting such a contrast, had he not been led, through his fondness for human hymns and paraphrases, to undervalue unduly the inspired songs of Zion.

3. The concluding reason about making the worship of the church on earth as like as possible to that of the church in heaven, scarcely merits a passing notice. Here the reference to the "*new song*" occurs again. But what was applied to the Millennium, in a former part of this sermon, is explained of heaven now; and those who plead for the exclusive use of the psalms are represented as in danger of being shut out from the worship of the upper sanctuary, as they were before, exhibited as unfit to take part in the praises of the millennial church! Their case

it must be deplored, is hard indeed ! But they may, notwithstanding, console themselves with the consideration that thousands of Old Testament saints were trained for the service of the heavenly temple by singing the Psalms of David,—that our Lord himself, while as the Victim of human transgression, he hung on the Cross, breathed out the holy desires of his soul in the thoughts and words of one of the psalms of the Old Testament, the 22nd,—and that many of the primitive confessors in the same exercise went to glory. Numbers, too, of Scotland's covenanted martyrs, male and female, finished their noble testimony on scaffolds, in the fields, and when chained within the tide-mark, by singing the words of the "sweet Psalmist of Israel," and thus exchanged the praises of the earthly sanctuary for the hallelujahs of the Father's house in glory. In the words of Lamartine, "Their life was a prayer, and their death was a psalm." Surely we may be well satisfied to have recourse to that as our most suitable preparation for glory, which was the immediate precursor of the entrance of our glorious Forerunner within the veil, and of millions, too, of His most devoted followers.

The length to which these remarks on the sermon on "The Psalms and Paraphrases" have extended, precludes us, at present, from entering farther into the general argument in favour of an exclusive inspired psalmody, and from exhibiting more fully the character of the poetical pieces that have been brought in to displace the Scriptural songs of Zion. One topic we may be allowed to hint at, in conclusion. As human hymns were first introduced in worship, when men had departed from the faith, and other corruptions were spreading throughout the church, so they have ever proved a powerful means of diffusing error and sectarianism, and of encouraging false devotion. The friends of inspired psalmody feel that they have no liberty to compromise a matter so vitally important as is any part of the church's prescribed worship,—to countenance dishonour cast upon the words of inspiration,—and to aid in perpetuating disunion in the Church of Christ. Those who plead for some use of hymns and paraphrases in social praise, are compelled to admit that the psalms are inspired, and free from all possibility of error. Why then, should they refuse—as a means of preventing or healing unseemly divisions—to return to a practice which the Church of God undeviatingly followed for a period of more than a thousand years,—from the time of David till the advent of Christ,—which had the sanction of our Lord and his Apostles,—and from which our Presbyterian forefathers, in times of reformation and persecution, never in a single instance departed? "*Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*"—Rom. xiv. 19.