

TEN  
REASONS

WHY

The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church Adheres  
to the Exclusive Use of the Inspired Psalter  
in the Worship of God.

BY REV. JOHN T. CHALMERS, D. D.,

PASTOR OF THE

FIRST ASSOCIATE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

Charlotte, N. C.

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C. P. Dyman

**PART I.—The Doctrine, Government and Worship of the Church Divinely Authorized and Prescribed.**

**I**N THE PRESBYTERIAN STANDARD of February 21, reference is made in a leading editorial to the position of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church on the subject of Psalmody. We merely ask space for a statement of our position on this subject and our reasons therefor.

The following is the article of testimony in question: "It is the will of God that the psalms, hymns and spiritual songs contained in the Book of Psalms be sung in his worship, both public and private, nor shall any other songs be used in worship by members of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church."

This deliverance is based upon the following doctrine or principle, viz: That the Doctrine, Government and Worship of the Church is Divinely authorized and prescribed by Almighty God, or, in other words, that we are required to show a plain command,—let it be by positive precept, plain example or fair and legitimate inference—authorizing and prescribing both the manner and matter of our worship.

The Westminster Standards teach that the acceptable way of worshipping God has been "prescribed, instituted and appointed by him,"—and further, he is not to be worshipped "in any way not appointed in his Word."

Believing then that the Book of Psalms or Inspired Psalter has been "prescribed, instituted and appointed" by God for use in his worship, and that no such authority exists for the use of any other book; and believing furthermore that "what is not commanded is forbidden," so that if no such authority exists for the use of other hymnology (that is if other hymnology is not commanded) it is therefore forbidden; the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church stands for the exclusive use of the Psalms in the worship of God.

We shall confine ourselves in this article solely to a statement and defense of our major premise, viz: That "we are required to show a plain command authorizing

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and prescribing both the manner and matter of our worship."

This is necessary because many holding to the Presbyterian system have lost sight of, ignored or renounced this fundamental principle. It is the hinge upon which the whole controversy turns. It is the rock bed, the blue granite, upon which the deliverance on Psalmody is based.

Now reader, remember that this is the proposition we propose to illustrate and defend, to prove by God's Word and by the standards of the Presbyterian Church. If you part company with us on this proposition, we must part company with you in the argument.

We are required to show a plain command—let it be by positive precept, plain example or fair and legitimate inference—authorizing and prescribing both the manner and matter of our worship.

It has been the prevailing disposition of man since his first act of disobedience to depart from and set aside the commands of God, or to blend his own inventions with the appointed ordinances of heaven. Too many, in their reckless haste to court favor and gain popularity, are consulting their own feelings and the tastes of the multitudes, to the utter neglect and disregard of the principle that we must have Divine authority for all that we do in the worship of God. In order to prove and illustrate the principle advanced, we call attention—

I. To some cases recorded in the inspired records which clearly and powerfully present the necessity of adhering rigidly to the divine appointment in all that we do pertaining to God.

(1) Take the case of the construction of the tabernacle. How frequently was Moses charged to make it according to the pattern shown him in the mount. All the priestly vestments, the various offerings and ceremonies were prescribed by God, and even Moses in his high position could not deviate in the slightest from the appointed plan and ritual unless God so ordered him. Everything about the tabernacle, "every knop, and flower and fringe, every bowl and branch and board, every skin and curtain and

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loop," had its place assigned by divine appointment. And are we to suppose that God is less careful, less particular and less jealous about his work to-day? The law of Divine prescription applied to all the forms of worship among the Israelites, to the permanent as well as the typical and transient.

(2) Consider the case of Nadab and Abihu. These young men were stricken down for offering "strange fire" which the Lord "had not commanded." It has been suggested that these young men might have been numbered among the advanced thinkers of their day, the patrons of progress and apostles of liberty, who imagined that a dash of liberalism would greatly improve and enrich the somewhat bald ritual of Jehovah. They failed to see why one kind of fire was not as good as another. The Divine appointment of one kind was a distinction without a difference. But God saw a difference; one was commanded, the other was not, and the penalty of their presumption was instant death. Thus was kindled upon the very threshold of Jehovah's temple a beacon "to send its lurid light athwart the centuries as a warning to all succeeding worshippers of the danger of tampering with divine ordinances by subtracting, supplementing or supplanting them by human authority."

(3.) The judgment inflicted on Uzzah furnishes a powerful evidence of God's jealous concern over all his ordinances, and of his determination that no human contrivances and measures shall be introduced into his worship with impunity. The ark was not being carried in the appointed way. God had commanded that it should be borne on the shoulders of the priests, but, instead, it was being hauled upon an ox-cart. Uzzah, prompted no doubt by a good motive, put forth his hand to steady the ark of God; but it was a violation of God's command, and Uzzah died by the ark.

(4.) But one of the most touching cases on record is that of Moses, who was denied admission to the promised land because, when sent to speak to the rock and give the people water, he smote the rock, which the Lord had not commanded. There lies the promised Canaan

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just across the river—a land toward which Moses had journeyed for well nigh forty long and weary years, and to whose possession he had looked with many joyous anticipations and burning hopes.

There it lies; but no, he cannot enter: he must rather climb the granite steps of the great mountain altar, and there, upon its bald and rugged summit, with the rock his couch, the sky for his covering and the cloud for his shroud, with no human friend to soothe his heart, ease his pillow or whisper peace to his departing spirit, he must submit to the sentence, "Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." Thus died Moses on Nebo's lonely summit, a witness to the just severity of God in punishing disobedience in the most eminent of his servants.

(5) Again, when Saul returned from Amelek, which he was sent to utterly destroy, and told Samuel that he had obeyed the Lord, the prophet inquired, "What meaneth this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and this lowing of the oxen which I hear?" "O!" said Saul, "we have saved the best of the sheep and oxen to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God." Was not Saul truly generous and devotional in desiring thus to honor God? But hear the stinging, heart-searching reply of Samuel: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. Because thou hast rejected the Word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being King." Thus, for not obeying in full the commands of the Lord, the crown fell from the brow of Saul, the sceptre departed from his house, and the star of his glory went down in infamy.

II. Since the principle we are contending for may be characterized as the corner-stone of the Presbyterian system, the rock upon which the Church is built, and her only protection against the encroaching flood of innovation, we will show in the second place that it is clearly and explicitly taught in the standards of the Presbyterian Church, the Westminster Confession of

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Faith, that grand embodiment and glorious compend of the wisdom of the ages.

(a) "The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men; or in any way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture."—Confess. of Faith, chap. 21, §1.

(b) "The duties required in the second commandment are the receiving, observing and keeping pure and entire all such religious worship and ordinances as God has instituted in his Word."

(c) The sins forbidden in the second commandment are "using and in any way approving any religious worship not instituted by God himself—corrupting the worship of God, adding to it or taking from it—and all neglect of the ordinances of God."—Lar. Cat., Ques. 108, 109.

(d.) "The Second Commandment forbiddeth the worshipping of God by images, or in any way not appointed in his Word.—S. Cat. Ques. 51.

Note these words employed by the framers of the Confession; prescribed, appointed and instituted. Some of the proof texts will be found by referring to Deut. 4:2 and 12:32; Math. 15:9; Rev. 22:18-19.

It may not be improper to refer to the authority of some of the wisest and best men the church has ever seen. (a) Says Bishop Hall: "It is a dangerous thing in the worship of God to decline from his own institutions." (b) M. Henry: "The way of divine acceptance is the way of divine appointment; God will have his work done in his own way." (c) Rev. Dr. A. A. Hodge: "God has prescribed for us how we may worship him acceptably, and it is an offense to either neglect to worship and serve him in the way prescribed or to worship him in any way not prescribed. In no case have we, upon the ground of taste, fashion or expediency to go beyond the clear warrant of Scripture." (d) Rev. Ashbel Green, D. D.: "We should see to it that we have a plain Scripture warrant for every religious act, duty or service

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that we either attempt ourselves or enjoin on others." (e) Rev. John L. Girardeau, D. D., LL. D.: "We are, in some respects, relaxing in our adherence to the great principle, that whatsoever is not explicitly commanded in the Scriptures, or cannot be deduced from them by good and necessary consequence, is forbidden—a principle which may be characterized as the corner-stone of the Presbyterian system. We have professedly appropriated it as ours. In the department of doctrine it has been maintained by us, and in that of government progress has happily been made in its application. But in the department of worship there is a growing tendency to slight it, and the experience of the Church has proved that its abandonment in one sphere is sure to produce its relinquishment in others. There is imminent danger just here, and it is the solemn duty of the young men of this Synod to subject this controlling principle, for which our fathers contended unto blood, to a full and careful study, and then fearlessly to give it that thorough-going application which its supreme importance demands. If not, as surely as water runs down hill, so surely will our Church lapse into defection from her venerable testimonies."—Address before Synod of South Carolina, Oct. 24th, 1885.

But so formidable is the argument and such an appalling aspect does it present to those who are conscious of a deviation from the divine appointment, that human ingenuity has been exhausted and truth tortured and put to an open shame in order to relax its rigor and set aside its application to special cases of experience.

(1) There are those who magnify the numbers that give countenance to their cause, forgetting that in both morals and religion the Word of God is the only rule and guide, and not the sentiments of any number of fallible men. In other words, they assert that truth must lie with the majority. But is this an infallible method of determining truth and right? How was it when Israel worshipped the golden calf? Or in the days of Ahab, when from among the millions of Israel only seven thousand were found who had not bowed the knee to Baal?

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Or when Elijah stood, single and alone, to meet the four hundred prophets of Baal? Who were right and who received the approval of heaven? How was it upon that dark and tragic day when Jerusalem and its environment rang with the maddened cry, "Away with him, crucify him"? Who were right during the dark ages, the multitudes that followed the "man of sin" and worshipped the virgin, or that little band of Christians who in the valleys of the Alps kept alive the sparks of true religion that ultimately kindled into the blaze of the Reformation? Who stand upon the safest ground at the present time, the few thousand who profess the true religion, or the countless multitudes who are virtually unbelievers? No, the race is not always to the swift, the battle to the strong, nor truth with the multitude, and when assailed with such logic let us not be intimidated or discouraged, but rather let us remember the babe in the ark of bulrushes, the stripling of Bethlehem before the giant of Gath, the little band of Gideon and the eleven fishermen of Galilee. Let us not forget these illustrious examples of Divine strength made perfect in human weakness, of the power of minorities when God is on their side, and the Saviour's precious words of promise: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

(2) Others maintain that we live under the gospel dispensation which is one of greater light and liberty, freedom and fulness than the old. It is asserted that the rigorous law regulating the worship of Jehovah under the Mosaic economy has been relaxed in the New Testament.

But what are we to understand by a man's "gospel liberty"? Is it a liberty to form his doctrinal beliefs, rules of life and religious observances irrespective of the word and authority of Christ? Was it ever bondage to be subject to the commands of God? Liberty under the gospel does not mean a liberty or license to adopt forms and manner of worship which God has not appointed. Liberty and law are not incompatible. There can be no true liberty without law. It is little short of blasphemy to assert that it is a species of thralldom to be restricted in

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out worship to forms and matter prescribed by God. The freedom or liberty which men enjoy under the gospel, so far as the manner and matter of their worship is concerned, does not lie "in the abrogation of the fundamental principle that God must be worshipped according to his own prescription, but in the abolition of the many cumbersome forms, minute regulations and prescriptions which formed so large a part of the legal ceremony." In the language of the Rev. Dr. Hodge: "Christian liberty is not an absolute liberty to do as we please, but a regulated liberty to obey God. There can be no liberty which sets a man independent of the will of God." The New Testament ritual, while simpler, is no less binding than the old. The Church is still eminently "Christ's house," so that "the intervention of any human judgment as to what shall constitute the furniture of that house is a profanation of and intermeddling with what is wholly the production of infinite wisdom."

"Furthermore, our Lord, in issuing to his apostles, just before his ascension to glory, the great commission which contemplated the evangelization of the world, imposed upon them this solemn obligation: 'Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.' This injunction of the Prophet and King of the Church involved three things: First, that the apostles, in their oral communications and in their inspired writings, were to teach all those things which Christ commanded; secondly, that they were to teach nothing but what Christ commanded; and thirdly, the Church to be organized by them was to obey their teaching, originated and enforced by the authority of Christ, and to introduce nothing into her doctrine, polity and worship which was not either expressly or impliedly warranted by the command of Christ as reflected by apostolic inculcation and example. This left the Church no discretion in regard to these elements of doctrine, government and worship. She is absolutely bound by Christ's commands, enounced originally by the lips of the apostles, and now permanently recorded in his inspired Word. She is obliged to do all that he has commanded; she is forbidden to do

anything which he has not commanded. She can construct no new doctrine, institute no new element of government, and decree no new rites and ceremonies—introduce no new mode of worship."—[Rev. John L. Girardeau, D. D., LL. D.]

(3) There are yet others who claim that there are many things which while not directly commanded are not expressly forbidden, and hence are to be tolerated or permitted. But the very principle in question implies a prohibition of all that is not commanded in the Scriptures by positive precept, plain example, or fair and legitimate inference. Admit for a moment the principle which demands a direct prohibition, and see what follows. Why, you have opened a wide door through which the incense, the crosses and crucifixes, the bowings and candles, the seven sacraments and other scarlet trappings of Rome can enter. Where is power to exclude them? Can you prove a direct prohibition? The fire which Nadab and Abihu offered was not forbidden in so many words; but the absence of a direct command proved to be a sufficient prohibition to warrant God in punishing the innovation with instant death. And is not Jeroboam censured for appointing a feast for Israel on the 15th day of the eighth month instead of the seventh? (I Kings xii:33.) He might have replied that God had not forbidden the eighth month, and that therefore it was allowable; but the inspired writer nevertheless censures him for devising in his own heart a time not appointed by God.

Moreover, when the testimonies of the Church expressly state that the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is appointed, instituted and prescribed by himself, is that not sufficient to require of all a plain command authorizing the act of worship? But the language of the Confession of Faith leaves no room for doubt or cavil: "The second commandment forbiddeth the worshipping of God in any way not appointed in his Word."

If Jehovah has given to his Church a complete rule of faith and worship, does it not follow that the addition of anything not expressly appointed is not only a daring

invasion of the divine prerogative, but a reflection upon divine wisdom and offensive to him who has said, "My glory will I not give to another."

III. But leaving these objections, let us pass to the consideration of a third argument enforcing the duty of conformity to the divine command in the worship of God, viz: The propriety of God's appointing and directing all the parts of his worship. If God is to be worshipped in some manner, it would be unpardonable presumption for any one to deny that God has the ability to prescribe forms of worship more suitable to his dignity and our condition than any in the power of man to devise. This consideration applies with special emphasis to that part of worship denominated praise, whose main design is to declare and magnify the excellencies of the divine character, and to give expression to every variety of devotional feeling which a contemplation of those perfections is designed to call forth. It is manifest to every judicious mind that there must be a perfect knowledge of God, of his nature and character. Without such an exhaustive knowledge, how can any creature frame a perfect and adequate system of worship? And does any created being possess this knowledge? "Who can utter the mighty acts of God, or show forth all his praise?" "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man that is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God." And who art thou, O vain man, who presumest to come into Jehovah's awful presence and to make known to him that which is beyond the capacity of strongest angel and tallest seraph? How sadly true that "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread!"

IV. A fourth consideration, favoring a rigid adherence to the Divine command, is the evils which result from a departure from this fundamental principle.

(1) And first, we find that whenever there is a departure from the principle we are advocating, very soon that which we first regarded as the obligatory becomes the optional, while that which was at first claimed to be merely permissive, comes to be regarded as prescribed. When-

ever any institution of Divine authorship comes to be regarded as merely optional, that institution will be either entirely disregarded, or by a natural process will become in the course of time to be recognized as the obligatory. For illustration, we know that a few decades ago the law authorizing the exclusive use of the Psalms was recognized by all the branches of the Presbyterian Church; but after a time a permissive warrant was supposed to be found for the use of hymns of human composition. The use of the inspired hymns of the Bible was not sinful or to be prohibited, but hymns of human composition might be used; and what has been the result? Why, the hymns of Divine prescription have been practically set aside. They are now regarded as merely allowable or permissible, while hymns of human composition occupy a place of as high, or even higher authority.

The mingling of the optional or permissive with the prescribed and obligatory has resulted in the exclusion of the latter from the high position which it is entitled to occupy in accordance with the design and appointment of the King and Head of the church. That which was at one time regarded as the prescribed and obligatory, has been made almost utterly void—has barely the force of an optional warrant—while that which was at first claimed as only permissive or allowable, is practically regarded by many as the prescribed and obligatory.

(2) Again, whenever the Divine and the human are placed upon the same level, whenever the Scriptures are supplemented by human inventions, more deference will be shown to the human than to the Divine,—the human will be exalted at the sacrifice of the Divine.

That the admission of human devices in the worship of God is apt to result in the setting aside of the positive enactments of God is taught by our Lord when he said to the Scribes and Pharisees: "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition," and "full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition." The Jews of old were far more tenacious of their own inventions, of traditional dreams, than of God's revealed code of duty.

No fact is more universal and unquestionable than that churches, which have most of the human in their worship and government, observe more carefully and rigidly and defend with greater zeal the rites and ceremonies of man's invention than they do the plainest ordinances of the written word.

In the time of the Stuarts the Puritans were persecuted—were fined and imprisoned—for not obeying the canons and rubrics, the foolish rules and regulations of foolish men while open disobedience to the commands of God, such as intemperance and profanity among the clergy, was not even rebuked, much less punished. None will deny that the recognition of "saints' days" and other "holy days" additional to the Sabbath, has interfered with and resulted in a diminution of a proper observance and sanctification of the Sabbath. Those churches having most of these "holy days" have always been characteristically lax in the observance of that one day which God has set apart for himself. And we have just adverted to the historical fact that the introduction of hymns of human composition has resulted in the practical exclusion of those of Divine inspiration.

A little while ago a friend observed that in attending service at five of the churches and the Y. M. C. A. in Charlotte, he had heard sung one hundred and thirty-six hymns and not one Psalm. In the practice of these at least, human songs are to God's songs, as one hundred and thirty-six are to nothing.

Admitting for the moment that we have the same and equal authority for the use of Divine and human songs in the worship of God, it will not be denied that more deference is shown to the latter. The human has been exalted at the sacrifice of the Divine. Men's songs are preferred to God's songs. Are not the grand and glorious Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual songs of God-given origin and prescription practically excluded from the worship of Jehovah in many places, while hymns from divers and even doubtful sources are used in their place? Thus our view of the law of worship is further vindicated by the result that logically and inevitably flows

from a departure therefrom, viz., that whenever the Divine and the human are placed upon the same level, the human will be preferred and exalted to the disparagement or utter disregard of the Divine.

(3) Another consequence to be deplored which has in no small degree resulted from a disregard and neglect of the great principle in question, is the divided state of the Christian Church. There are Universalists and Papists, Unitarians and Armenians, Baptists and Episcopalians, Lutherans and Calvinists, Mormons and Moravians, Adventists and Swedenborgians—and others, each claiming to be the Church of Christ.

And if you could listen to the songs of praise which to-day are offered to God as acceptable worship, it would be the confusion of Babel. You would hear almost everything offered to God as a pleasing service, from "blank Arminianism to cold, heartless Deism." And can they all be equally right and equally acceptable to God? They all claim that the Church has a right to direct her worship, but here we find a hundred different sects each claiming to be the true Church and nearest right. Has Jehovah given laws and regulations so multiform and antagonistic?

We forget that truth is a "glorious organism, from which nothing can be abstracted and to which nothing heterogeneous can be added, without detriment to the beauty and power of the whole;" we forget that the Church as organized by Jesus Christ has "one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism," that Christ has given but one system of government; but one code of laws; but one form of acceptable worship, and that those only are nearest right who are nearest the pattern shown us in the Mount. It is not only unreasonable, but the climax of absurdity, to suppose that Christ would have given laws to his Church so vastly different and justly antagonistic, laws that have kindled in his temple a flame that consumes the bonds of peace and love, laws that provoke the "rage of theologians" and mar the beauty and symmetry of his body, laws that invade the sacred precincts of domestic life and set the father against the son, the daughter



against the mother, and the husband against the wife.

No, no, such a thought is revolting. God has given no such laws to his Church; and had the Christian Church always adhered to the Divine command; had no human hand ever meddled nor human wisdom interfered; had no innovations of man's contrivance been smuggled into the Church under the specious plea of liberty, gospel liberty, the worship of the Church to-day would have been as harmonious and heavenly as that of pure and sinless spirits around the throne. These principles constitute the only permanent basis of union among all denominations—the only ground where warring parties may meet in concord, ungird their armor, forget their animosities and with one voice and one heart unite in the worship of the great Jehovah.

Candor compels us to admit that there is a tendency towards relaxation in our adherence to the great principle that whatsoever is not commanded in the Word of God is forbidden. Some manifest a disposition to disparage the precise forms enjoined by God, or, while applying the principle in the department of doctrine, they slight it in the department of government and worship.

But so intimate is the connection between the doctrine, government and worship of the Church, that whatsoever affects the integrity and purity of any one of them, will produce a corresponding modification of the others. And the history of the Church has proved that the abandonment of the principle of adherence to the Divine command in one sphere is sure to produce its relinquishment in others. We are aware that indifference to the prescription of Jehovah is regarded by many as a mark of exemption from besotting prejudice, and as evincing a wider liberality of mind and broader Christian charity. But let us not be deceived. If we believe that our doctrinal beliefs, forms of government and mode and matter of worship are agreeable to and founded upon the Word of God, let us stand by them like men and obey them to the letter.

We have received from our fathers a scriptural organi-

zation whose shining distinction is its steadfast adherence to the revealed will of God as the exclusive standard of Faith and Duty, apart from which there is nothing valuable in religious belief or lawful in religious practice. The battles of Presbyterianism in its purest form have been fought and won under the banner on which was written, "Hold fast the form of sound words; contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." Some of her sons have been content to suffer reproach on account of the tenacity with which they have clung to the "thus it is written." And when we hear the cries of those who claim to be in the ranks of advancing thought, to relax the bands of our authority; or of those who, in the name of modern liberalism, have presumed to remodel the sanctuary of God, let us not forget that these truths have stood the test of ages—yea, have survived the assaults of men who were giants taller and mightier than any one we have now to meet.

Let us not forget the baptismal fires of martyrdom through which these grand old truths have passed, and passed unscathed, because there was with them one like unto the Son of God. Let us not forget the heroic struggles which our fathers endured when witnessing for the truth which the Holy Ghost had impressed upon their saintly lives. To-day the testimony of these witnesses is sounding in our ears; yea, a voice speaks to us in trumpet tones from valleys whitened with the bones of saints from the tombs of martyrs and hillocks red with blood; a voice that reminds us of our lineage, that rebukes our cowardice and bids us repeat the same witness.



**PART II.—The Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs of the Inspired Psalter Divinely Authorized, Appointed and Prescribed in the Worship of God.**

We have devoted Part I of this discussion to a defense and illustration of the fundamental principle, "That a divine warrant is necessary for every element of doctrine, government and worship in the church; that is, whatsoever in these spheres is not commanded in the Scriptures, either expressly or by good and necessary consequence from their statements, is forbidden."

This principle is the acropolis of the church's liberties, the palladium of her purity. It operates positively to the inclusion of everything in the doctrine, government and worship of the church which is commanded, explicitly or implicitly, in the Scriptures, and negatively to the exclusion of everything which is not so commanded.

The proposition we propose to establish now is this, and this only, "That the Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs contained in the Book of Psalms have been appointed, instituted, prescribed and commanded by God to constitute the matter of praise in the worship of his church, both public and private to the end of the world."

If any others are offered or employed, whether inspired or uninspired, it rests upon those who offer or employ them to show the same or equal authority for their use, else they are excluded.

"The law is, not that we are at liberty to act when God has not spoken, but just the contrary; we have no right to act when he is silent. It will not answer to say in justification of some element of worship that God has not expressly prohibited it; we must produce a divine warrant for it. The absence of such a warrant is an interdiction."

"We can not without guilt transcend divine appointments. No discretion is allowed the church to introduce into her worship what God himself has not instituted and appointed. He has not constituted her his vicere-

gent or his confidential agent. She is intrusted with no powers plenipotentary. She acts under instructions, and is required to adhere to the text of her commission."

Now, if it can be established that the songs contained in the book of Psalms, and they only, have been given and appointed by God to be used in his worship in the ordinance of praise, the conclusion must follow that these songs, and they only, are to be used in the formal worship of God in the ordinance of praise.

We beg the reader to keep this proposition clearly in mind as we proceed, separate and distinct from all irrelevant questions and side issues.

NOTE—(1) That it is not a discussion of the respective merits of inspired and uninspired compositions.

(2) That it is not a question of what the practice of the church has been, unless we go as far back as Apostolic times, and ascertain the apostolic sanction.

(3) It is not a question respecting different versions of the book of Psalms, or their comparative excellences or defects. The position of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church is that these songs are to be sung in a version, whether it be measured or unmeasured lines, which is as true and accurate a rendering of the words and sentiments of the inspired Psalmist as can be obtained.

Concerning the version now in use, viz: the "Revised Version of the United Presbyterian Church of North America," it may be remarked that competent judges have pronounced it even less liable to the charge of inaccuracy in its fidelity to the original Hebrew, than our generally faultless English Bible. When it differs from the prose it has been found most frequently the more accurate.

But it is not a question concerning versions. Just as it is in regard to the Bible itself—let the inspiration and divine authority of its various books be established and admitted, and the question of translations—their comparative merits—will settle itself.

(4) Nor is it a question of the singing of songs of human composure for one's own comfort, or for purposes

of entertainment, instruction and recreation, but it is a question of what shall be used in the formal worship of God in the ordinance of praise.

There is a wide difference between the singing of songs for recreation, or even as an expression of our own emotions whether sad or joyful, and the employment of songs in the solemn, devout and prescribed worship of God.

We must not confound the reading or singing of patriotic songs on public occasions, or songs sung in private circles for musical recreation or practice, or at social gatherings, operas, political, musical and other conventions, and the formal celebration in acts of worship of God's high praise.

Singing may be engaged in for various purposes; for the enjoyment of the performers, or the pleasure of the hearers; in such a case the hearers, or singers, may choose the songs they think will please most. Singing may be simply to instruct or to awaken the soul to action. A poetical quotation or part of a sermon may be sung as well as spoken. Then such songs as are judged best by men may be employed, for we are singing or speaking to men, and not to God. But when we come to praise God, in the instituted ordinances of his worship, we contend that only the songs which he has prepared and given his people should be used.

If you go to a neighbor's table, he may set before you meat, potatoes, cake and coffee, but when you go to the Lord's Table you have no right to expect anything but the bread and wine, which he has appointed. There are many songs of human composure which may be sung with profit, in various senses to the singer; but where the purpose is to render praise to him who is "infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth," to him who himself has taught us that he is "greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all that are round about him," then the praise which is comely is that which he himself has taught us.

The question, as thus defined and separated from all side issues with which it is frequently confounded, is

simply this: What is the will of God? What saith the Word? What has God appointed or authorized?

It is assumed in this argument that praise is an ordinance of divine worship, and that this duty is to be performed by the singing of Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs. It is also admitted and recognized as a necessity by all churches, that a form must be prepared beforehand, in which all can join. However they may differ in regard to a Book of Prayer, yet all are agreed in regard to the necessity of a Book of Praise or Song Book. The only question to be settled is, how shall that book be furnished? Has God provided or furnished such a book; or has he left each church or each age of the church to furnish one for itself? We affirm that God has provided and given the Book of Psalms to be used by his church in all ages to the end of time.

I. From the reasonableness of the expectation or the strong presumption that God would give such a manual of praise to his church.

To understand this proposition clearly, let us ask what it is to praise God?

Let it be borne in mind that the main object of praise is to declare and magnify the excellencies of the divine character, as well as to give expression to every variety of devotional feeling which the contemplation of these perfections is designed to quicken and call forth. Such a task requires a perfection of knowledge of God and humanity which is beyond the natural capacity of the highest angel, much more of such ignorant, fallible men as the best of God's saints are, even when enlightened by the word and ordinary influence of the Spirit of God, as much beyond their ability as the writing of one of the epistles or other books of the Bible would be. "What man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God"—because the Spirit, and he only, "searcheth all things, even the deep things of God."

"To praise God is to exalt him in words of song; to magnify him, to glorify his perfections and the infinite

excellence of his words and works. What man can do this? Who is sufficient for these things? "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Who can tell us what God is? Who can describe his glorious majesty? Who can teach us how to praise him and frame words fit to magnify his name? Who but God himself? "God is a Spirit," his own Son has told us. What of Spirit life and Spirit nature can these dull senses of ours describe or comprehend, that we should think ourselves sufficient to write the praise songs that are due to him?

What man lives now, or has ever lived with native power sufficient fully to comprehend and rightly to magnify so great a God as our God? Only one who knows God, who understands him, who comprehends him in all his infinite perfections, has any reason to think that he is sufficient to assume the task of writing hymns of praise. Such attainment is necessary if the attempt be made without a call to this office and without the aid of inspiration.

In the very nature of the case, understanding what praise is, and to whom it is to be rendered, the thoughtful mind will find good reason to expect a manual of praise ready prepared and put into his people's hands by the Lord himself.

II. This reasonable expectation has been entirely realized in the fact that we have a Book of Praise, written, named and appointed by the Holy Spirit to be used in the church's service of song. Why were the Psalms collected into a book by themselves?

They were written by various authors and at different times; some of them are to be found in other portions of the Old Testament; but they have all been arranged in one book, and that book is called the Book of Psalms, or Divine praises. Here we find selection and arrangement. There must have been some purpose in this. What was that purpose? What could it have been, except that these Psalms were adapted to the worship of the church,

and that they were designed and collected to be used in the worship of the church?

Moreover, it is a fact, which deserves particular notice, that some of the songs, contained in the Book of Psalms, are likewise found in other parts of the Bible. The eighteenth Psalm is found in the Second Book of Samuel, and the ninety-sixth, and the parts of some other Psalms, are found in the Second Book of Chronicles. Other songs, such as the song of Moses at the Red Sea, the song of Deborah and Barak and others, found in different parts of the Bible, are not transferred to the Book of Psalms. And the question naturally arises, Why is this distinction made? Why are some of these songs, which are found in other parts of the Bible, introduced likewise into the Book of Psalms, while others have no place in that collection? The answer is, that the book of Psalms being designed for permanent use in the worship of God, those songs have a place in this book, which, in the estimation of Infinite Wisdom, were best adapted to the edification of the church in all ages.

III. The titles which the Holy Spirit has employed to designate these divine hymns indicate the particular use for which they were intended.

(a) They have been entitled by the Holy Spirit the "Book of Psalms," or Book of Praises. By this title they are referred to repeatedly in the New Testament. For example, our Lord, when speaking with reference to this portion of divine revelation, says: "David himself saith in the Book of Psalms." (Luke 20:42). And in accordance with this is the language of the Apostle Peter: "It is written in the Book of Psalms." (Acts 1:20).

The word "psalm" is of Greek derivation, and comes from a word which signifies to sing. Psalms, then, are songs which are to be sung. And by giving to this collection of sacred songs the title of "Book of Psalms," the Holy Spirit recognized them as songs of praise to be sung in the worship of God.

(b) The same purpose is indicated 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.

(c) They are called the "Songs of the Lord" (1 Chron. xxv: 7); which, like the expressions, "Table of the Lord," "Supper of the Lord," "Day of the Lord," implies Divine authority and appointment.

(d) They are called the "Songs of Zion" (Ps. cxxxvi: 3), which implies that they were designated for the use of the church.

IV. The matter and structure of these divine songs are peculiar, and indicate the particular end for which they were intended. They are full of praises to God for what he is himself, and for his wonderful works in creation, providence and redemption. They are written in the peculiar style of Hebrew poetry, so that they could be sung or chanted.

As the peculiar character of the contents of any composition manifests the end for which it was intended, so from the matter of the Book of Psalms, we learn that its peculiar design is the celebration of God's praise, and that it was given to the church to be employed peculiarly for that purpose. Says Dr. Jonathan Edwards, "God inspired David to show forth Christ and his redemption in divine songs, which should be for the use of the church in public worship, throughout all ages. The main subjects of these sweet songs were the glorious things of the Gospel; for whereas before, for many ages, there was but here and there a prophecy of Christ in many ages, but here he is spoken of by David, his ancestor, abundantly, in multitudes of songs, speaking of his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension into heaven, his satisfaction and intercession, his prophetic, kingly and priestly office, and his glorious benefits in this life, and that which is to come. All these things and many more concerning Christ and his redemption, are abundantly spoken of in the Book of Psalms. This was a glorious advancement in the affairs of redemption, as God hereby gave his church a book of Divine songs for their use in that part of their public worship, namely,

singing his praises throughout all ages to the end of the world. It is manifest the Book of Psalms was given of God for this end."

V. The completeness, fulness and sufficiency of the Bible Psalter as a manual of praise gives to it a supremacy and permanency such as can be predicted only of that Word of God which liveth and abideth forever.

Containing an absolute purity of doctrine and freedom from words which engender division and foster sectarian strife because edited by God and therefore free from the transient and partial views of men; revealing so fully the character of God, describing so accurately the place and character of man; dealing so clearly with the method of salvation, and being so full of Christ, his face seen on every page, his voice heard in every tone and the pulsing of his heart felt in every strain; showing God's relation to his Universe and furnishing man, as nature's priest, with the incense of praise with which to bless God for his creating and sustaining power, abounding in songs that tell of universal dominion for the Gospel and anthems that shall serve as battle cries and shouts of victory for the church militant; Zion's songs, like the mountains which first rang with their majestic strains, stand unmoved, and shall endure until the heavens be no more.

Volumes might be filled with the testimony drawn from every age, and from almost every conceivable source, showing the perfection of the Psalter as a complete manual of praise. For three thousand years has it been tested, and never has it failed. These Spirit-indicted songs have sounded the depths of human sorrow, scaled the heights of human joy, run the gamut of human needs, and upborne the prayers and praises and adorations of the saints of the Most High in all ages and climes. But it is enough to say that because they are inspired of God they must be divinely complete, perfectly adapted and entirely sufficient to fulfill the design of the gracious Giver. They must be better—incomparably better—than the highest products of human wisdom or

skill, and therefore ought to be the one medium of Christian praise.

VI. There are express commands in God's Word to sing these songs.

(a) "And he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord and to record, and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel."

"Then on that day David delivered first this psalm, to thank the Lord, into the hands of Asaph and his brethren."

"Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people."

"Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works." (1 Chron. 16: vs. 4, 6-9.)

The song here referred to is also the one hundred and fifth number in the inspired Psalter.

(b) "Moreover Hezekiah, the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord, with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped." (II Chron. 29:30.)

(c) "O come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation."

"Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms." (Ps. 95:1-2.)

But why multiply texts, when these Divine songs abound with ascriptions of praise to God, and with urgent calls addressed not only to the church in her collective capacity, but to all classes of men, to engage in this delightful exercise: "Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem! Praise thy God, O Zion!" "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord."

But some, while admitting the positive command to sing the Psalms under the former or Mosaic dispensation, may claim that there was a limitation as to the time of their appointment to the Church's Psalmody. But where is the suggestion of such a limitation? They were not written for the Mosaic dispensation alone, for but few of them were written until that dispensation was 400 years

old. The book was not completed until it was 1,000 years old. Nearly two-thirds of that age had passed before this system of song had reached completion. Surely there is in this fact the suggestion, that these psalms were intended rather for the Christian than for the Jewish Church. In spirit and in matter they are immeasurably in advance of the times that produced them; aye, far beyond the times which we have reached in some of their revelations. They, and they alone, are emphatically the songs of all ages. No one can find in them the mark of limitation.

VII. The New Testament commands us to sing Psalms.

The duty of praise is very distinctly recognized in the New Testament. 'By him,' says the Apostle to the Hebrews, 'let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.' (Heb. xiii:15.) And again, 'Is any merry? Let him sing psalms.' (James v:13.)

In what sense is it reasonable to suppose, that the primitive Christians would understand the Apostolic direction, 'Is any merry? Let him sing psalms.' To assist in determining what is the proper answer to this inquiry, let us propose another question. When our Lord said to his hearers, 'Search the Scriptures,' in what sense is it to be supposed that this direction would be understood? No one will pretend that our Lord designed that his hearers should understand him as instructing them to prepare writings, the matter of which was to be taken from the Bible, which they might consult for their improvement, instead of searching the Holy Scriptures for their edification. Equally unreasonable would it be to suppose that the apostolic directions, with regard to singing psalms, could be understood by the primitive Christians, as authorizing them to prepare psalms to be used in the worship of God, instead of those which he himself had provided in his Word. As the command of Christ, 'Search the Scriptures,' supposes that there were in existence sacred writings with which those to whom the command was addressed, were acquainted, so the

apostolic direction, 'sing psalms' supposes that these psalms were in existence, which those to whom the direction was given were to use. Those Christians to whom the words of the Apostle James were originally addressed, knew full well that among the sacred writings which God had given to his church there was a 'Book of Psalms.' And the exhortation to sing psalms would naturally be understood by them as a direction to make use of the psalms which the Spirit of infinite wisdom had already provided. And to this may be added this truth that the Psalms are much more suitable and appropriate now than they were under the Old Testament; for much of the language employed in them respecting Christ and his kingdom must have conveyed but a dim and shadowy meaning to Old Testament saints. But in the clearer light of the New Testament these shadows disappear and the rich, golden truths contained in these Psalms shine forth with a beauty and splendor which delight the eye and ravish the heart of every enlightened student and lover of God's Word.

VIII. We have the example of our Lord and his apostles who sang the songs, hymns and psalms of the inspired Psalter.

In the gloomy precincts of a dungeon, Paul and Silas at the hour of midnight prayed and sang praises unto God, and at the close of the last Passover and institution of the Lord's Supper, Christ and his disciples sang a hymn. (Matt. 26:30.)

Were it admitted, or proved, that this "hymn" was made for the occasion by our Saviour or by one of the apostles, what authority would thus be furnished for the making of hymns by mere men, and these uninspired!

Certainly, none at all. But this "hymn," it is now almost universally acknowledged, was the "Great Hallel," consisting of a number of consecutive Psalms, and always sung at the close of the Paschal feast. Says Dr. Clarke: "As to the hymn itself, we know from the universal consent of Jewish antiquity, that it was composed of Psalms 113, 114, 115, 116, 117 and 108, termed by the Jews Hallel, from Hallelu—Jah,

the first word in Psalm 113th. These six psalms were always sung at every paschal solemnity."

Says Dr. Broadus: "It is interesting to read these Psalms (113-118) in this connection, remembering that Jesus himself took part in the singing. The term "hymn" must not be here taken in our common sense as differing from a Psalm, nor is there any radical distinction between the two in Col. 3:16 and Eph. 5:19."

Albert Barnes says: "There can be no doubt that our Saviour and the apostles also used the same Psalms in their observance of the Passover."

That the Saviour himself used the Psalms in worship, no Christian scholar will deny. Their being sung by the Redeemer's tongue confers a glory and wealth upon them above anything human. If they were sufficient for him in worshipping his Father, they ought to be sufficient for his followers until he furnishes them something else.

IX. We have in addition to all the above two plain, positive, unmistakable commands in the New Testament to sing the psalms, hymns and spiritual songs of the inspired Psalter.

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." (Eph. 5:19.)

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Coloss. 3:16.)

We not only affirm, but have the highest authority for regarding it as an admitted fact, that the songs here referred to are the psalms and hymns of the inspired Psalter. But inasmuch as these passages are sometimes quoted in support of songs of praise other than the Psalms, we will consider them more fully under Part III of this discussion, Question 4th.

X. As a concluding argument, let it be remembered that the New Testament knows no book of praises other than the inspired Psalter, there is no intimation whatever that another book of songs is needed or would ever be given to the church. There is neither a direction given

to any man to furnish such a book, nor a single promise of the influence of the Holy Spirit to assist any man in preparing one. When Jesus "ascended on high and received gifts for men," he bestowed upon his church all the gifts necessary for her edification to the end of time. He gave some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Now, if it had been necessary for the edification of his church, is it not reasonable to suppose that among other gifts he would have conferred the Spirit of Psalmody? But in vain do we look for the gift of a Psalmist or the spirit of Psalmody. No such office as hymnist is named. The apostles and all who believed through their word had, and still have, the promise of the Holy Spirit to help their infirmities in prayer, and in everything that enters into Christian service save the preparation of songs of praise. There is a promise of the Spirit's help in the offering of praise, for Paul says "I will sing with the Spirit"; but there is absolutely no promise of his assistance in the composition of matter to be used in praise. Seek for such pledge from the beginning to the end of the New Testament, and you will seek in vain. There is no promise made for the substitution of another system for that contained in the Book of Praise.

If the collection of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, which had been the church's sufficient manual of praise for many generations, had been inadequate to the needs of the saints in the gospel dispensation, then he who inspired a John and a Paul to make a fuller and clearer revelation of the doctrines of grace would also have touched the lips and tuned the harps of other Davids and Asaphs. The absence of such provision may be accepted as proof of the sufficiency of the existing book of songs to meet and satisfy every possible want in this important part of God's worship.

The conclusion is inevitable. This Book of Praise is the only one that bears the sign manual of the church's Lord. It is the only one that can point to the sanction of God as the basis of its claim upon the Church of

Christ, and thereby it is the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church declares that "It is the will of God that the psalms, hymns and spiritual songs contained in the Book of Psalms be sung in his worship, both public and private, nor shall any other songs be used in worship by members of the Associate Reformed Church."





### PART III.—Some Questions Answered.

Part I. of this discussion was given to our Major premise: That the Doctrine, Government and Worship of the Church have been divinely authorized, appointed and prescribed; and that nothing is to be used in the formal worship of God which he has not appointed.

Part II. contained our Minor premise: That the psalms, hymns and spiritual songs contained in the Book of Psalms, and they only, have been given and appointed by God to be used in his worship in the ordinance of praise.

Part III. will be devoted to the consideration of some questions, and a fuller study of some texts, for which space could not be given in the body of this Discussion.

It is asked: (1st.) "May not the songs of Mary, Zacharias and other poetical compositions in the New Testament be regarded as 'precedents' for the use of uninspired compositions?"

In reply we say, (1) There is no evidence that these songs were ever sung in God's worship. Of Mary it is merely stated that she "said." Of Zacharias it is said, "He was filled with the Holy Ghost and prophesied, saying, etc."

(2) If they were used, they were "inspired" and not "uninspired" songs, as their authors were "spirit filled;" and

(3) Such use could by no possible logic be construed as a warrant to compose and sing uninspired songs in the worship of God at the present day.

(2nd.) It is asked, "Why we may not use our own words in singing praise, just as the preacher uses his own words in his public ministry, and if he chooses may quote a poem, or even sing it, if he can sing it more effectively than he can speak it? Have we not the same right to sing Gospel songs as to preach Gospel sermons?" To this we answer:

(1) That there is a vast difference between addresses made to God in song, and an address made to an assembled congregation, the preacher does not preach to the Most High—he speaks to the people before him. He who would confound these under the general name of "worship" has yet to learn the proper nature of each part of our social religious exercises.

(2) We have the command to preach the Gospel, but the words in which we are to teach and preach are nowhere given us. It is plainly implied that we are to teach and preach in our own words. So the apostles did, and so the Church universally has understood the plain command of Christ.

(3) God has given his Church a book of praise and commanded its use. He has nowhere given a book of sermons and commanded their use.

(4) What is not commanded in God's Word is forbidden. Then show the command to make or compose songs of praise, and the command to use them in the worship of God.

3rd. "If we may use our own language in prayer why not also in our songs of praise? Have I not as much right to use my own words in praise as in prayer?" This has been called a "centre shot," and we are told "there is no escape from its logic."

The sophistry and fallacy of this plausible and popular plea for the use of songs of human composure will be made clear to the honest inquirer after truth by a little thought and examination.

(1) In prayer we come to God to ask for those things which we need; but in praise we ascribe to him the glory which is due unto his name. As our situation and circumstances are ever varying, our wants are very different at one time from what they are at another. Our petitions must consequently be framed in accordance with our wants. But God is unchangeable, and his praise is always the same. That glory which is proper to be ascribed to his name at one time will always be proper. Our wants are always changing, and, therefore, our

prayers should vary; but the glory of God is ever the same, and therefore the same collection of songs will serve for the expression of his praise from age to age.

(2) In prayer our thoughts suggest the words, our desires and sentiments determine the language we employ; but in praise the words are designed to suggest the thoughts and sentiments we should have in our hearts. Therefore we should use words calculated to suggest the most appropriate thoughts, and "The words of the Lord are as silver tried, yea, more to be desired than fine gold."

(3) In prayer one leads the exercise while others follow and unite. A single heart and mouth may utter that in which thousands may cordially and without inconvenience unite. But in praise, all simultaneously lift up their voices together in extolling the name of God, hence a form, prepared beforehand, is absolutely necessary. We can pray without having matter prepared in advance. In fact it would be impossible to provide such a form in advance, as we do not know what requests for prayer might be made in a large congregation. But we cannot thus sing praise. Let your congregation try it next Sabbath morning. Provide no matter for praise beforehand, and see how you will get along in the praise service.

(4) In a debate in favor of prescribed forms of prayer, or a book of prayers, a similar argument was offered by Dr. Prideaux, of the Episcopal Church. Hear the answer of Rev. Samuel Miller, D. D., LL. D., of Princeton Seminary: "The argument from analogy is too weak and childish to be regarded as at all applicable. How is it possible for a worshipping assembly to unite in singing a psalm or hymn, unless both the words and tune are previously known, and, virtually, if not formally, agreed upon? In this case, it is not possible to proceed a step without something prescribed and known beforehand. But all experience proves that no such prescribed form is needful in prayer."

(5) God has seen fit to make a difference between prayer and praise, inasmuch as he has provided a book of praise for his church, but no book of prayers. Here

is the divine command to pray: "In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." This implies that we are to express our requests in our own language.

Now we are also commanded to sing psalms, and God has seen proper to provide us a book of praise. To say then that "as we use our own language in prayer, so may we in praise," is to ignore the fact that God has provided a Book of Psalms, but no book of prayers. Had we a book of prayers in the Scriptures, and were we commanded to use it; were there no precept enjoining the use of any prayers not contained in this book, and no promise of help in making prayers, then we would be compelled to use it. We have no such prayer book, but we have a hymn book prepared of God and commanded, showing that God himself regards the ordinances of prayer and praise in a different light.

(6) We have a form of prayer given us by our Lord who said, "After this manner pray ye." Neither Christ nor his apostles limited themselves to that prayer. It was a form, model or pattern only. But where is the divine song, given as a model, with the command, "after this manner make ye psalms, hymns and songs?"

(7) While God has commanded us to pray for objects without giving us the words in which to pray, he has promised divine help in the performance of the duty of prayer. "We know not what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself helpeth our infirmities. The Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." (Romans viii. 26.)

But where, in all the New Testament, is the aid of the Holy Spirit promised to help us in composing or making songs of praise? His help is promised in the singing of praise, for Paul says, "I will sing with the Spirit," but there is absolutely no promise of his assistance in the composition of matter to be used in praise.

Moreover it will be admitted that it is more difficult to compose or make a psalm or hymn than a prayer. Now if God has allowed us to compose both in our own language, why has he promised the help of the Spirit in

prayer, the least difficult, while he withholds his aid in hymn-making which is most difficult?

And why did he provide the Jewish church with songs of praise dictated by himself, while he left the poor Gentile church to struggle with the difficulties of hymn-making in their own strength?

(8) The argument proves too much. If you have the same right to make your songs as you have to make your prayers, so has every Christian. Then let every Christian make his own songs as he does his prayers. And as the prayers of Presbyterians are largely extempore, so let their songs of praise be extempore. It will not be denied, that while any and every Christian can pray, probably not one in ten thousand is capable of making or composing a song of praise fit to be sung. Do those who proclaim this strange doctrine practice what they preach? Do they make their hymns as they do their prayers? Or do they depend upon others to furnish their hymns? If so, why not depend upon God? Why go to frail, erring men, rather than the Spirit of God for songs with which to sing forth the honor of his name, and make his praise glorious? If it be absolutely necessary for somebody to prepare a form or manual of praise, why not use that inspired manual which bears the unmistakable impress of the Church's King and Head?

(9) Again, the argument proves too much, for reading is also an act of religious worship, and if the use of our own words in prayer proves a right to use them in praise, will it not also prove a right to use our own words or writings in place of God's Word in worship?

How intensely interesting family worship would be! The father takes down a volume of selected poems, and says, We will sing a song from Byron, or Pope, or Moore, or Mrs. Hemans, or Mr. Sankey. He lifts another volume to read for our instruction a few pages from Bacon, an essay of Macaulay's, a sketch of Washington Irving's or a few paragraphs from Ben Hur. The prayer following would be characterized by a like independence of the Spirit. One may be defended on the same ground as the other.

(10) Is it not most remarkable that if the disciples were left to make their own hymns as they were to make their prayers, that they did not ask for gracious help? They did feel their need of help in prayer, for they went to Christ with the words, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." Why was it that they did not go to him and ask, "Lord, teach us to make hymns as thou didst thy servant David"? Was it because hymn-making was such an easy task that they felt no need of help? Was it because hymn-makers then, like some of more recent date, felt neither the need of nor the inclination to seek divine assistance? Or was it because the early church used the inspired Psalter?

We trust the reader now has felt the full power of this "centre shot" and appreciates the forcefulness(?) of the "logic from which there is no escape."

(4th.) It is asked, "Have we not divine authority for the use of uninspired songs of human composure in the directions of the apostle to sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs?" Here are the texts:

"Let the words of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Coloss. 3:16.)

"Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." (Eph. 5:19.)

Concerning these passages, we affirm: (1) That the "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" referred to are inspired compositions, and are found in the Inspired Psalter, or Book of Psalms. (2) That these passages cannot by any fair and legitimate method of interpretation be construed as containing authority for the indiscriminate use of uninspired songs in the formal worship of God. The distinction between "psalm" and "hymn," the former meaning an inspired and the latter an uninspired song, is a purely modern one.

The use of the word "hymns" in this scripture as "catch words" may be popular, but it is of no value as

evidence with thoughtful people, when it is remembered that these passages were written many centuries before the existence of any "hymn book" now in use. The question to decide is this: "Were these hymns, spoken of by the apostles, found in the Bible, or in some hymn book that has been lost, or in one just issued from the press?"

"But if the words 'psalm,' 'hymn,' and 'spiritual songs' all refer to the same collection of songs, why are there different words used? Would the Holy Ghost use so many words in the same sentence to mean the same thing?"

We reply: (a) Will the reader please tell us why the Holy Ghost has used the three words "statutes, judgments and commandments" in the following passage: "Concerning this house which thou art in building, if thou walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commands to walk in them; then will I perform my word with thee, which I spake unto David thy father": (1 Kings 6:12); or why God says, "forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin" in Ex. 34:7; or why Paul used the terms "supplications, prayers, intercessions" in 1 Tim. 2:1, or can you tell the exact distinctions between these terms?

(b) It is not denied, however, that there may be a distinction in the meaning of these terms; they may designate three distinct kinds of devotional poetry, and some scholars have defined the technical difference between an "ode," a "hymn" and a "psalm;" but it is most positively denied that the difference is that which exists between what is inspired and what is uninspired. Until such a difference is proved, the question at issue is not touched.

I. We affirm that all the songs referred to in these passages are comprised in the Book of Psalms, as the Jews applied the terms "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" indiscriminately to the Book of Psalms; or that the inspired Psalter contains hymns and songs as well as psalms. We shall show this from both History and Scripture.

#### I. History.

(a) Josephus says that "David, being free from wars and dangers, and enjoying for the future a profound peace, composed songs and hymns to God, of several sorts of metre, and that he taught the Levites to sing hymns to God."

(b) The Apostolic Canons contain this injunction: "Let another sing the 'hymns of David,' and let the people repeat the concluding lines."

(c) Dr. Gill, the distinguished Baptist Commentator, tells us that they are spoken of in the Talmud by the name of "songs, and praises or hymns."

(d) Eusebius, quoting Psalm xxxiii:9, calls David "a prophet discoursing of God in his hymns."

(e) Moreover the term "hymns" meaning "Book of Psalms" continued in use for many centuries after the apostolic age, for Calvin quotes Hilary (who lived in the fifth century) as saying that "hymns from the Book of Psalms should be sung at the altar," etc., showing us that the term "hymns" was still applied to the Psalms of the Bible. If the words "Book of Psalms" had not followed the word "hymns" in this quotation of Hilary, hymn-singers would have said, without hesitation, that the term "hymns" meant songs of human composition. How false would have been the conclusion.

Thus we find abundant proof that the songs of the inspired Psalter were generally known by the name of "Hymns."

2. Let us now open the sacred Scriptures, and here we find proof to the same effect.

In the Hebrew, three distinctive titles are given to the songs contained in the Book of Psalms, viz: Mizmor, Tehilla and Shir, which the most eminent Hebrew scholars admit are correctly translated psalm, hymn and song. The book itself is called in the original title "Sepher Tehillim," the Hymn Book. The 145th Psalm is called Tehilla l' David, which Gesenius translates, "a hymn of David." The same term is often introduced into the body of the Psalm. Let the reader compare Psalm 22d and verse 23d of the Hebrew, with the Greek of Hebrews ii:12, and he will find the declaration of the Psalmist, "In

the midst of the congregation I will praise thee," rendered by the Apostle "I will sing a hymn to thee." The word Halleluia, which so frequently occurs in the Psalms, is just a call to sing a hymn to the Lord.

But this is not all. The version of the Old Testament in use in Gentile countries, was the "Septuagint." Before the time of Christ the Hebrew Bible had been translated into Greek, as was supposed by seventy-two individuals, and hence called the "Septuagint" or translation of the seventy. This was the version from which the apostles generally quoted, and the one familiar to the Ephesians and Colossians. Now in this version of the Scriptures, the Book of Psalms has all the titles spoken of by the apostle in the passages under consideration, some of them bearing the title of psalm, others of a hymn, and still others of a song, exactly corresponding to the Hebrew titles already referred to, Mizmor, Tehilla and Shir.

These words in the Septuagint version are the very same employed by the apostle when he commanded them to sing, many in the collection being called psalmos or a psalm, others hymnos or a hymn, and others ode or song. Thus, for example, Ps. IV. is called "an ode or song of David among the psalms," Ps. 6, "Among the hymns on the octave, a psalm of David." Ps. 18, "The words of this ode or song, etc." So is Ps. 29, "A psalm of a song." Ps. 54, "Among the hymns, etc." So is Ps. 76. In Ps. 72:20, which closes one of the divisions of the Book of Psalms, we read: "The hymns of David, the son of Jesse, are ended." The Psalms from 120 to 134 inclusive are entitled odes or songs.

One psalm, the 75th, bears all three titles in that translation. It is called a psalm, a hymn and an ode—the very words used by the apostle. Now we ask the candid reader to draw his own conclusion.

Paul urges the Ephesians and Colossians to sing "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs," and all they had to do was to open their own Bibles to find a collection of songs, some entitled psalms, some hymns and some songs, just such as he had enjoined them to use, while they

might have "searched creation round" without finding another book of divine poems designed by the same titles.

The Psalter was the only book in existence containing psalms or songs with the different distinctive titles which he specifies, so that it seems morally certain when Paul wrote to the Christians at Ephesus and Colosse concerning the matter of their praise, using the very titles found in the Psalm-book they then had, they would understand him to refer to that book and no other.

II. Again we are informed in Matt. 26:30 that Christ and his apostles sang a hymn. That this "hymn" sung by Christ was taken from the collection of songs called "The Book of Psalms" is almost universally admitted. It was a part of the "Hallel, comprising Psalms 113th to 118th. (See Part II, argument VIII, of this discussion.)

Now if it be admitted that the hymn sung by our Saviour and his disciples was taken from the Book of Psalms, we argue from this admission that the hymns referred to by the apostle in these passages belonged to the same inspired collection. If this inspired collection was used by our Lord and his disciples, the presumption is, in absence of all proof to the contrary, that it would still continue to be used by the disciples.

Says Albert Barnes, "There can be no doubt that our Saviour and the apostles also used the Psalms in their observance of the Passover." Why then doubt that the apostle referred to the same collection when he told the Ephesians to "sing hymns?" Surely if any argument can be drawn from the *usus loquendi* of the sacred writers, it is on the side of those who maintain that the reference in these passages is to the Psalms of divine inspiration.

III. There is not a particle of evidence that any uninspired praises were used in the church in the time of the apostles, nor, at least, for one hundred years after their day. Dr. Schaff, who was a zealot on the subject of uninspired hymnody, was long engaged in a search after a song of human composition that was sung by the early church. He found one which he thought was composed about the year 200 A. D., but found no proof whatever that it was used in the worship of God.

If other songs were used, who prepared them? Surely not the Ephesians and Colossians just recently converted from heathenism. Were they competent to prepare a psalmody for the church? Did the apostles prepare them? Then is it not strange that we have no hint of this, and that they are all lost? Did the Holy Spirit qualify some one to prepare songs for the church at that time? Then is it not stranger still that there should be no hint of this, and that they should all so utterly perish? He does not usually suffer his words and works to fall to the ground and disappear. Yet all these, if they ever existed, have so entirely disappeared that no subsequent writer or historian has so much as mentioned them. But even granting such songs were in existence and have been lost, where is the authority either here or elsewhere to supply their place, or to use those which are not inspired?

IV. Is it reasonable to suppose that Paul would have called upon the Colossians, so lately won from the uncleanness and abominations of idolatry, against the insidious influence of which this epistle warns, so subject to the power of a false system of philosophy, which was even then pushing itself dangerously near to the church in this city, to write their own songs of praise, when the Spirit had already furnished a book of praises exactly suited to their wants? The same may be said of the Ephesians, who were from their childhood worshippers of the great goddess Diana.

Would it be safe to commit to men just converted from their idolatrous worship, and consequently but partially enlightened and established in the truth, the making of hymns and spiritual songs, in which to celebrate the praises of Jehovah? What would be thought of the missionary in our day who would instruct the newly converted heathen, knowing but little of God or religion, to provide himself with a collection of Psalms and hymns? In fact, a great majority of the most advanced and intelligent Christians, in Christian lands, feel themselves unequal to such a task. When Paul therefore commands saints in his day to sing Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, he must necessarily refer to the Psalms of David,

the only collection of hymns then in use. And if Paul did not call upon these Churches to provide their own songs of praise, he has called on no people to undertake such a task.

V. If "hymns and spiritual songs" mean mere human compositions, while the word "psalms" refers to the "Book of Psalms," it follows that Paul has put the Word of God and the word of men upon a par by directing them to be used for the same end—that is for filling the people of God with the Spirit!

Now we would address ourselves to that reverence which the Christian reader cherishes for the Word of God, and ask him whether an interpretation, involving such a presumption as this, is reasonable? If we could believe this, we would not find it much more difficult to believe that there is no essential difference between what is inspired and what is not inspired, and we would have little use for the Bible as a divine revelation. If a man who is now under the influence of the Spirit of God can give us matter which we may, equally with that which is inspired, use as the matter of God's praise and as the means of being filled with God's Spirit, we do not see why the same man may not give us other matter which we may use equally with the Bible in other parts of worship, and for edification.

VI. It is more than probable that such an innovation would have provoked the strongest opposition on the part of the Jewish Christians. The first Hebrew Christians were drawn largely from the synagogue, and naturally brought with them those songs of Zion which were associated with their earliest recollections and best feelings, and appropriated them to the services of the New Dispensation. They had been accustomed from their childhood to consider inspired psalms alone admissible in the worship of the sanctuary, and cherished a holy, and even superstitious dread of everything like innovation or departure from the good old customs of their fathers. Is it at all probable that under these circumstances the apostle would direct to the use of uninspired hymns, or that such an innovation would have been received with-

out a vigorous protest, or even an open rupture between the Hebrew and Gentile Christians?

VIII. The word "spiritual," ("spiritual songs") as used in these passages precludes the idea of human composition. These songs are called "spiritual songs," which implies that the Spirit of God is their author. The word "spiritual" is used in the New Testament in the sense of supernatural, or that which is immediately given by God.

Prof. Benjamin B. Warfield, of Princeton Seminary, recognized by the whole Presbyterian Church as an eminent authority, says of the word "spiritual": "In twenty-five instances in which the word occurs in the New Testament, in no single case does it sink so low in its reference as the human spirit, and in twenty-four of them it is derived from Pneuma, the Holy Spirit. In the sense of belonging to or determined by the Holy Spirit, the New Testament is uniform in the use of the word, with the single exception of Eph. 6:12, where it seems to refer to the higher though fallen superhuman intelligences." The word, as Paul employs it in the text, does not describe the nature of these songs, but tells of their origin. It calls upon these Colossian Christians to sing the "songs of the Spirit"—that is, songs which the Holy Spirit has indited and furnished to the Church. In singing the songs of David we know that we are singing such songs, for he himself tells us that the "Spirit of the Lord spake by him; and his word was in his tongue." No songs that have been written by man without a direct revelation from the Holy Spirit and an unquestionable call to such service can by any possible construction be made to meet the requirement of the text. One only needs to stop and think to be convinced that Paul would not call upon these people, so lately won from idols, to provide for themselves songs of praise, when the Spirit of God had already made provision.

VIII. Another proof in favor of the interpretation we have given, is that the apostle directs to the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs as a means of "letting the Word of Christ dwell in them richly in all wisdom,"

language which will apply more appropriately to the inspired psalms than to any human composition. No song of uninspired man can be properly called the "Word of Christ."

Reference is mainly to the Old Testament Scriptures, as but a small part of the New Testament was written at this time. "The Spirit of Christ," we are told, "was in the prophets when they testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glory which should follow." And the Psalms may, with the greatest propriety, be called the Word of Christ, for "there is not," says Bishop Horsely, "a page of this Book of Psalms in which the pious reader will not find his Saviour, if he reads with a view of finding him."

IV. We now ask the reader to open his Bible and read carefully the chapter in which these passages occur; noting this fact, that the apostle is exhorting Christians generally to the performance of various Christian duties. He says, "Set your affections on things above; mortify your members; put on the new man; forgive one another; put on charity, and let the peace of God rule in your hearts, etc.," duties that are incumbent upon all Christians in whatever sphere of life they may move. Now in this immediate connection we find the passages under consideration exhorting to the performance of a duty obligatory, not upon a favored few, but upon all the "elect of God," upon all the followers of Christ.

If the passages enjoin the duty of making or composing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, the conclusion is that all the followers of Christ are called upon to do this thing. None are excepted and the duty is not optional but obligatory.

But can any man in the possession of sober reason believe that the apostle commanded all the Colossians or all the Ephesians to make or compose songs of praise? How few, if any, of them could have complied with such a requisition! Even in the present age, when the advantages of education are more general than in apostolic times, this would be a task not one in a thousand among Christians could perform. How preposterous to sup-

pose that the Apostle exhorts the disciples of Christ in general to perform a duty so far beyond the capacity of the great majority! It is unreasonable to suppose that a duty is commanded of such a nature that so few could possibly perform it. Clearly the Apostle is exhorting to the diligent use of such matter as they already had in their possession as a means of mutual edification. If his command to "Sing psalms and hymns," etc., can be construed as meaning "Make ye psalms and hymns and songs," then it can be claimed with equal show of reason that Christ's command to "Search the Scriptures" meant "make, write or compose Scriptures."

But if this last command meant that they were to "search" a volume of Scriptures already in their possession, then the other command to "Sing psalms," etc., refers to a volume of such songs already at hand.

In view of these considerations, these two passages of the New Testament Scriptures are to be regarded as an apostolic injunction to praise God by means of these psalms, hymns and spiritual songs which he himself has given to his Church. They are a positive command to use the inspired Psalter—the Word of Christ.

Having given these passages what we believe to be a faithful and impartial examination, we will show in the last place how the result harmonizes with some distinguished authorities.

#### SOME AUTHORITIES.

X. (1) Dr. Owen, and twenty-five others, signed a preface to the Westminster version of the Psalms published in 1673, in which they said: "To us, David's Psalms seem plainly intended by these terms of Psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs, which the apostle useth."

(2) Ridgely, in his *Body of Divinity*, expresses the same view, and says, "It cannot be denied that the Psalms of David are called indifferently by these names."

(3) Dr. Gill, the learned Calvinistic divine of the Baptist school, in the introductory remarks to his commentary on the Book of Psalms, says, "To these several names of this book, the apostle manifestly refers in Eph.

v:19, and Colossians iii:16. In his exposition of Eph. v:9, thus expresses himself, "The hymns are only another name for the Book of Psalms," and "by spiritual songs are meant the psalms of David, Asaph, etc."

(4) Calvin, according to Doddridge in his note to Col. iii:16, "thinks all these words refer to David's poetical pieces."

(5) Dr. Broadus on Matt. xxvi:30, says, "The term 'hymn' must not here be taken in our common sense as differing from a Psalm, nor is there any radical distinction between the two in Col. iii:16 and Eph. v:19"

(6) The Right Hon. Lord Selborne, F. R. S., in the Standard work, *The British Encyclopedia*, says: "The modern distinction between psalms and hymns is arbitrary. The former word was used by the LXX. as a generic distinction, probably because it implied an accompaniment by the psaltery or other instruments. The cognate verb 'psaltere' has been constantly applied to hymns, both in the eastern and western Church; and the same compositions which they described generically as 'psalms' were also called by the LXX 'odes' (i. e. songs) and hymns. All the words thus used were applied by the LXX. to the Davidical Psalms."

(5th.) Again it is asked: "Is not the position of our Church a very narrow and exclusive one?"

We answer: No more so, we believe, than the Word of God and the teaching of the Presbyterian Standards. In the words of Dr. Russell:

"It is the narrowness of protection, the exclusiveness of the great dyke, which keeps back the threatening tide of sentimentalism, and saves true worship from being submerged by the dribbling rhapsodies of uninspired men. That some breakwater is needed against this tide, is the constant testimony of those who are leaders in our sister denominations. Our principle is that dyke; our declaration is a standing protest against the view that anyone may prepare matter of praise for the Church; that any and every one may bring incense for the service of the sanctuary from any garden of spices where imagina-



tion may chance to roam; and that any Christian, in moments of spiritual exaltation, may indict the songs which shall supplant God's own word."

#### CONCLUSION.

We have now finished our argument and shown a Scriptural warrant for the position of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church on the subject of Psalmody. Our appeal has been to the Scriptures and to the Presbyterian Standards as interpreting them. Any arguments in favor of the use of "other songs" in the ordinance of praise must be derived from the same sources, or they are to be regarded as unworthy of answer. We have carefully avoided all side issues and arguments "ad hominem," and confined our attention exclusively to the Scripture as the sole and sufficient arbiter on this subject. All questions of human taste and wisdom, of history, experience or of expediency, are subordinate to this fundamental inquiry; what is the will of God? We claim that divine authority and warrant have been shown for the use of the inspired Psalter in the worship of God.

Now if any other songs are to be used we have a right to demand that similar authority be furnished. Here the burden of proof rests on those who introduce other songs in addition to what we have proved to be given by divine appointment. Let it be shown that they too have been divinely "authorized, appointed, prescribed and instituted" by Almighty God. Let it be shown that such compositions bear the direct and unmistakable impress of Christ's authority, an impress so clear that he who refuses to use them, limiting himself to the inspired Psalm, is guilty of despising an ordinance of Christ.

Can such a case be made out? Can it be shown that I am bound to sing the songs any poet may choose to write and offer as devotional matter? Can the poet himself make such a demand upon me? Can the minister impose any obligation upon his hearers to sing any songs he may choose to announce from his pulpit?

Can the Church enforce the reception and use of any

hymn book she may select? Now when men are called upon to unite in praising God in the psalms and hymns and spiritual songs of the Scriptures, upon which he has impressed the sanction of his own authority, we can no more decline to respond without sin than we can refuse to read his word or wait upon the ministry which he has appointed.

But I might have in my possession for half a century unopened and unused any one of the thousand and one hymnals now offered the public, and yet be guiltless before God. But how can this be if God has "authorized, appointed and prescribed their use" in his worship? "To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable nor your sacrifices sweet unto me."

"Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

