

PLAIN REASONS,

Why neither Dr. Watts' Imitations of the Psalms, nor his other Poems, nor any other human composition, ought to be used in the Praises of the GREAT GOD our SAVIOUR—

BUT, THAT

A METRE VERSION of the BOOK of PSALMS, examined, with wise and critical care, by pious and learned divines, and found by them to be as near the Hebrew Metre Psalms, as the idiom of the English language would admit, ought to be used.

BY THE LATE REV. THOMAS CLARK, V. D. M.

CHRISTIAN READER,—

If thou art really a Christian by sweet experience, as Saul of Tarsus was made, then thou surely standest in awe of the divine law, revealed in the holy Scriptures, the only rule of truth and practice, by which all men shall be finally judged: Thou hast been made like him in all humility to bow before the Most High God, and to say as he said, (Acts ix. 6.) "Lord what wilt thou have me to do," i. e. in thy public praises. Wilt thou have me to praise thy blessed name with elegant words of human composition, by some esteemed far superior to the best version of the Book of Psalms? or, Wilt thou have me to praise thy holy Majesty with the sacred words of unerring Revelation? If this is thy serious enquiry, then let me offer thee some *reasons* why it appears a moral duty for thee to avoid the use of human compositions, of uninspired men, in praising God; and to use the Psalms of God's own institution and appointment in worshipping him.

That we ought to avoid the use of human compositions in praising of God, appears clear from the following reasons.

I. *It is unwarrantable.* You can find no commandment of God on divine record (that I know of) requiring you to use any *Imitation*, or any human composition, instead of that Book of Psalms God hath given you. Nor can you learn that ever God inspired any of his own Apostles to alter or change the Psalms, or to make or use any imitations of them in divine worship, under pretence of their being more agreeable to New Testament times.

They must, in their own conceit, be very wise indeed, and have a very high opinion of their own abilities, that think they can contrive Hymns or imitations of Psalms, preferable to those that eternal, divine and unerring Wisdom hath contrived and given you. Would to God you and I had grace sufficient to sing

the 150 sweet Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs, (being is the titles of the three arrangements) which the all-gracious God hath in his love and piety bestowed upon us, without wandering through the world after the swarms of human compositions now extant. You know all the Hymns, all the Antiphones, Missals, Holidays, and Breviaries, brought into the Romish church, one century after another, was still done by some new pretender to a higher pitch of zeal, for improving the worship of God. But for you or I to come before God in solemn praise with any human invention or imitation, I am afraid we shall meet with those awful interrogatories, "Who hath required this imitation at your hands?" Isa. i. 12. and by what authority doest thou these things? and who gave you this authority? And what will you answer when thus questioned? May the Lord keep you and I from being wise above what is written for our rule in the holy Oracles.

2. *To use such an imitation in divine worship is entirely needless, superfluous, and perhaps superstitious.* There is no occasion, no necessity for it in the world; the Book of Psalms God gave you, is abundantly sufficient as it stands, for all the sacred purposes of devotion and praise; it is without spot or wrinkle; it has the stamp of divine authority, and to lay it aside and bring in this imitation, is like offering strange fire on God's altar, as did Nadab and Abihu, Lev. xi. 2. And although temporal judgments are not now perhaps so abundantly poured out on those who dare to reject God's own Psalms and bring imitations in their room and stead; yet, I greatly fear, spiritual judgments are upon those that use them: For, as Zacharias was struck dumb for his unbelief of the divine message, so are they struck dumb in the House of God—their tongues cleave to the roofs of their mouths; they either cannot, or will not sing, even this imitation itself. No: with sorrow I have seen it, they are left to wander vainly in their own counsels, with their own imitations, and are dumb before the Lord, in many worshipping assemblies, all except a few concillators, or singing boys and girls in the gallery; when I hear them, I should surely think I had happened in a Mass-house in Dublin, did I not recollect that I was yet in a professed Protestant country. Had there been any real deficiency or imperfection in God's Book of Psalms, then such an imitation might have had some show or appearance of necessity; but that is very far from being the case, for God's Psalm Book is holy, just, spiritual and perfect. A little shifting and changing from God's Book to an Imitation Book, may for a while please the carnal heart, but God has commanded you not to meddle with them that are given to such changes.

These Psalms which God in old time gave to his Church, were found sufficient for the use of the kings, priests, prophets and saints of God, in Israel some thousands of years, and in the use of them our forefathers, martyrs and reformers obtained much communion with God, and great pleasure and felicity, and what would you have more? We had abundance of Psalms bestowed on us by a gracious and good God; but alas! for our want of understanding of them, our great want of love to them, and our sad want of faith and zeal, to sing these songs of Zion with due propriety and perseverance.

3. *You may not use said imitation because it tends to grieve and offend God's people, and destroy the amiable peace of the Church.*—The using it brings pious people into this sad dilemma; either they must sit still, and see their own God's Book of Psalms neglected and rejected, and say nothing; which would be contrary to that solemn charge that God gave them, to hold fast the form of sound words, and contend earnestly for every article of faith; or else they must speak up against the superfluous use of the imitations and expect to be railed upon for it. Must not this greatly grieve them? Can pious people avoid being grieved and offended to see such tumult, noise and wild disorder raised in the ivory palaces of the Prince of Peace; and all about an *imitation* of God's Book of Psalms, which we had no need of. Will you then use it, while in so doing you expose yourself to that dreadful curse? "Offences must needs come, but wo to that man through whom they come. It were better for him that a millstone was hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than offend one of these little ones." Mat xviii. 6. No doubt, sometimes pious persons, through temptation and corruption, take offence when none is given nor intended to be given them. But that is very far from being the case here; because, they see before their faces these treasures of wisdom and knowledge, the Book of Psalms, broken, torn, militated and massacred to please carnal men, and they see the havoc made on them in God's own house, upon his holy Sabbath day. They see twelve of them condemned to perpetual silence, as unworthy even of imitation; their voice must never more be heard in God's Tabernacle—that is, the 43, 52, 54, 59, 64, 70, 79, 88, 108, 137, and 140. These Psalms are the sincere milk of the word, and to see them torn from the mouths of the babes of grace, is a sight of great cruelty. No doubt they can get them to *read* in prose, but they cannot any more, in many worshipping assemblies, get them to sing as in the days of old; for now every one hath a doctrine and a psalm or a hymn: there's Wesley's Hymns, Whitefield's Hymns, Spalding's Hymns, Mason's Hymns, and Dr. Watts' great bunch of Hymns, *imitations*, &c. Can they be blamed for being grieved and offended, while they see such wild *disorder* forced into the house of the God of order and peace, and all for the sake of a new thing, that we stood not in the least need of? To grieve them is to grieve the spirit of God that dwells in them. What impudence is it in any poor, conceited, uninspired man, to form a poem, and then stamp it with the sacred name of a *Hymn*?

4. *Because using said imitation in God's worship, is a conniving with, and becoming art and part guilty with such as reproach and blaspheme that part of God's holy word, called the Book of Psalms.*

Dr. Watts, in his preface to that edition of his *imitation* and Hymns, printed for Rivington, London, 1768, page 5th, says, "The dull indifference—that sits on the faces of a whole assembly while the Psalm is upon the lips must tempt—to suspect the minds of most of the worshippers are absent or unconcerned—I have been long convinced that one great occasion of this evil arises from the *matter* and *words* to which we confine all our songs." Did you ever read another author that had the daring impudence

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to charge the crime of sinners' *dull indifference* in worship upon the *matter* and *words*, that God has put in his *Book of Psalms*? I suppose not. If the divine *matter* and sacred *words* of the *Psalms* have that dangerous influence upon worshippers, he asserts, did not God do us a great hurt to put such a *dulling* book in our hands, was not this instead of a fish to give his children a scorpion? And will Dr. Watts' *imitation* of such *dulling matter* and *words* remove the dreadful crime? Does not trial, made by twenty years experience, loudly proclaim the contrary, to all the attentive world, who see so few sing God's praise, either in their families or churches? In old time, a pious king, who often complained of *dullness* and darkness, in God's worship, says, "I will never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me." Ps. cxix. 93. Luther used to call the Psalms *God's little Bible*, and summary of the Old Testament. I read of a girl, aged five years, whose conversion was begun while she joined her parents in singing these Psalms one morning, as was the daily custom of the family before breakfast; she persevered in piety till she was 80 years old, and died in triumph.

He further saith in his preface, "Some of them" (the Songs of Zion) "are almost *opposite* to the spirit of the gospel," that is the Spirit of God. How can any man imagine that any part of God's word can be either *almost* or altogether *opposite* to his Spirit. None but Deists pretend to find any opposition between God's *word* and his *Spirit*, nor between one part of the word and another. The *seeming oppositions* in Scripture, have been long since clearly explained and reconciled, in many pious and sacred books, particularly in a Latin treatise, called *Lux in Tenebris*.

Again, in said preface, he says, "When, our souls are raised a little above the earth, in the beginning of a Psalm, we are checked on a sudden in our ascent towards heaven, by some expression—fit only to be sung in a worldly sanctuary."

Surely God's kind design in giving us these Psalms was, that they might be a happy means to promote our *ascent* towards heaven; and can God so far miss his gracious design, that any of them will check us in our *ascent*. The most base songs that ever were composed by lewd ballad makers, could not be charged with a more barbarous spiritual murder, than this of driving a poor soul *back*, when it had happily got on its *ascent towards heaven*.

Another reproach expressed in said preface is—"When we are just entering into an evangelical frame, yet the very next line perhaps, which the clerk parcels out to us, hath something in it so extremely Jewish and cloudy, that it darkens the sight of God, the *Saviour*."

How base this reproach, while it is certain, that a great personage, in old times, looked through the Psalms, and through all the Jewish cloudiness in them, and by them got a sweet and clear sight of God the Saviour, so that being thereby raised up from his dejections, he with the voice of devout joy and gladness sings: Ps. 109, 24.

My comfort and my heart's delight thy testimonies be
And they in all my doubts and fears are comforters to me.

One of the greatest heroes that ever commanded an army, who never lost a siege nor a battle, joyfully celebrates the commendations of all-revealed truth, of which the Book of Psalms is a special part, saying, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Ps. cxix, 105.

Another slander asserted in said preface is—"While we are kindling into divine love by meditations of the loving kindness of the Lord—within a few lines some dreadful curse against man, is proposed to our lips, *that God would add iniquity to their iniquity*—which is so contrary to the new commandment of loving our enemies—our hearts are as it were forbid the pursuit of the song, and the worship grows dull of mere necessity."

The God of truth says, *all Scripture* (the excluded Psalms not excepted) *is given by inspiration of God and is profitable*; but if Dr. Watts' saying here be true, that part of it is *detestable*: For here again the *matter* and the *words* of the sweet Book of Psalms, is accused of *quenching divine love* kindling in the worshippers, being so dreadful and so contrary to the new commandment of loving our enemies. But you know they are ill, very ill, acquainted with the law, that see not a clear consistency between its curses and its precepts. Could any man be justly reckoned guilty of breaking the new command of love to his enemy, while he faithfully warned him, that if he went on robbing and murdering, an ignominious death would be his portion? As little is it contrary to said new commandment, for God, in his Book of Psalms, to warn and tell us, that if we live a lewd life, adding sin to sin, and die unconverted, he then, as a righteous Judge, will number up our crimes, adding one after another, in the numbering of them, till the sum be fully deserving eternal woe. Who knows not that this is the voice of pure and holy justice, expressed in the dreadful law curse, with a gracious design to alarm us as rational men to fly to Jesus for pardon and holiness. And though the words of the curse are translated in the form of a *prayer*, yet they could as well be expressed in the form of a *prophecy*, which they really are; telling a sinner before hand, that if he goes on in his trespasses, adding new iniquity to his old iniquity, the iniquity of this new year to the account of the iniquities he did in the old year, then God will add to his lot, all the torments mentioned in this book.

David was a prophet and a type of Jesus Christ. The God who inspired him to write these Psalms is not to be presumptuously challenged why he inspired him to write such and such words. If David had been speaking even of his personal enemies, it would not be the voice of revenge. He fasted, mourned, prayed, and wore sackcloth for them that rewarded him ill for good. Ps. 35. 14. So did Paul travail as it were in birth, to have Christ formed in those, who said "his bodily presence was weak and contemptible;" and reproached him as "walking according to the flesh." 2 Cor. x. 2. 10. Yet under inspiration of God; he says, "if any bring, or preach any other gospel, let him be accursed." Gal. i. 8. 9. Now this was not the voice of revenge, but his calmly telling the truth, that if they deviated from the gospel, God would add that to the former great account of their iniquity.

If it dull the worship so much to mention any of the wraths that await sinners, then Dr. Watts' *imitation* or image of the Psalms will dull the worship too, and should be expelled; for in the 7th page of said edition, he sings:

On impious wretches he shall rain,
Tempe t of brimstone fire and death;
Such as he kindled in the plain
Of Sodom, with his angry breath.

Although the sacred words and divine matter, be here erroneously blamed for causing the "worship to grow dull of mere necessity," yet I aver, that the blame lies in the unbelief, carnality and enmity of depraved human nature, which is so high in command, that it not only makes the worshippers grow dull and weary of the song, but it actually arrests negroes, peasants, merchants, soldiers, colonels, generals, governors, kings and queens at home in their own apartments on the Sabbath day. For months, for years, they can have no inclination to public worship; they avoid the Kirk as a pest house: So great is the power, so extensive the command of these accursed corrupt dispositions of the human soul.

Depraved men of all ranks have been the willing slaves to the wide extended empire of *Enmity* these five thousand years; yet they know it not, nor will they believe the mournful truth, though one rise from the grave and tell it. Are there not some persons upon whom God has bestowed very large, and affluent fortunes of wealth, who are yet under the bonds of so strange an aversion, that they have not been twice at public worship these seven years, nor have given one shilling of all that wealth, to support the worship of that great God, on whose bounty they live, and in whose raiment they glitter like tinselled butterflies.

5. *Because while you use not the Book of Psalms itself, only an imitation of it, you expose yourself to all the curses that divine law and justice denounces against such as add to, or diminish from his word.*

If you connive with the daring diminishers, for by using it, you as really bar the Book of Psalms out of use and practice, in public worship, as really as if you had gone and hired the book-binder to omit binding it in with the canonical books of the Bible; for what avails it to have it bound in among the sacred books in prose, while it is never sung. The other canonical books were given by God to be *read*, but the Book of Psalms was given us for a double use, to be both *read* and *sung*, in faith. Now, it is entirely expelled and abolished from being sung, and an image or imitation of it put in its room, in the house of the Lord. It is awfully dangerous for you to be one of that number who conspire to diminish twelve psalms from God's system of psalmody. Thou shalt not add to the word that I command thee, nor diminish ought from it. Deut. iv. 2. If any man shall take away from the words of this book, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life. Rev. xxii. 19. Thou sawest a thief, (that robbed the church of twelve psalms) and thou didst join with him—I will reprove thee. Ps. i. 18. 21.

My dear reader, see how the diminishing or taking away, goes on in two instances among many. Ps. iv. 4, 5. You have six precepts in the Assembly's Version which are as follows:

Fear and sin not, talk with your heart in bed, and silent be,
Offerings present of righteousness, and in the Lord trust ye.

In the imitation it runs thus:

When our obedient hands have done a thousand works of righteousness,
We put our trust in God alone, and glory in his pard'ning grace.

Is not every one of the said six moral precepts here past over in silence, and the very sweet warrant for sinners presenting the Redeemer's righteousness, as a sin offering to God taken away, and a song left us about a thousand works of righteousness done by our own hands, though strictly speaking, all our righteousness is filthy rags.

I have, not yet had time to examine this imitation strictly as to its orthodoxy, but I observe in the Assembly's Version, it runs thus in Ps. li. 2. 3.

Me cleanse from sin, and thro'ly wash from mine iniquity:
For my transgressions I confess, my sin I ever see.

How widely different is the imitation of these verses.

Should'st thou condemn my soul to hell,
And crush my flesh to dust;
Heaven would approve thy vengeance well,
And earth must own it just

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

No doubt the Dr. affirms, that he is far from reproaching the sacred Book of Psalms, for he says, page 8th, in said preface—"Far be it from my thoughts to lay aside the Book of Psalms, in public worship; few can pretend so great value for them as myself—but it must be acknowledged still, that there are a thousand lines in it which were not made for a church in our day to assume as its own."

But by means of his degrading and reproaching the Book of Psalms, it is now laid entirely aside, for above twenty years past; it is as effectually laid aside, as if he had warmly petitioned all the synods, councils, and associations, on this continent, and obtained their solemn vote for its exclusion; and as surely laid aside as if he had petitioned all the legislatures on the continent, and got them to pass acts that none of them should be printed or sung any more, from one end of the United States to the other. For he has in print publicly blamed the matter and words of God's Book of Psalms, as guilty of dulling the worshipping assemblies—he charges it with checking them in their ascent towards heaven—he degrades it as darkening their sight of God the Saviour—and condemns it as openly contradicting both the Spirit of God in the Gospel, and the new commandment. Was ever any book wrote or printed on this continent, so vilified and blasphemed in more opprobrious language, or charged with more pernicious injury to men's souls; and yet he pretends a great value for it. After its reputation as a part of God's unerring word, is ruined and abolished, then a clear large way is made for introducing his IMITATION in its place, under a great many fine

characters—as being far more suitable to the various cases of the souls of Christians—far more agreeable to New Testament language and times, &c. &c. Thus as Joab did to Amasa, he kisses it with a pretence of great value for it, and in the mean time stabs it under the fifth rib, with an opprobrious reproach: And is it not dangerous, dreadfully dangerous, to connive with such reproach and blasphemy. And his diminishing not only twelve psalms from it as unworthy of imitation, but blaspheming the whole, as hindering men from ascending to heaven, and darkening their sight of that blessed Saviour sent by God to bring lost sons to glory. How tremendous the danger to join in such daring diminishing from the number, the reputation, and the use of God's Book of Psalms! How awfully hazardous to join in adding and using a new imitation in room thereof, that is so unwarrantable, so superfluous, so destructive to the peace of the church, and offensive to the children of God! How aggravated the sin to commit all this in the face of God's curses, his four times repeated curses, that are more loud than ten thousand thunders—“Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.” Prov. xxx. 6. “All liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.” Rev. xxi. 9. “Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law, and all the people shall say, Amen. Duet. xxvii. 26.

But now that we ought to use God's own Book of Psalms, in praising his name, is clear from these REASONS.

I. *Because God commanded us to praise his name with the words of David and Asaph.* 2 Chron. xxix. 30. We have two instances of persons inspired to make and sing a song, on two special occasions, viz. Moses and Deborah, but after the eternal Spirit spoke all the words of the Book of Psalms, by his holy chosen penmen, it appears that he did it for this special purpose, that we should serve him in solemn praises, with those most suitable words, devised by his own unerring wisdom. In Psalm cii. 18. God declares that, “This shall be written for the generation to come, and the people who shall be created shall praise the Lord.” God wrote out the Book of Psalms, that with them the generations to come into life, even in the New Testament times, should praise the Lord with these very words.

The pious and learned commentator, Henry, on Psalm cxlv. 1. thus explains it, “I will bless thee forever and ever.” “This intimates, says he, that the psalms he (viz. the Psalmist) penned, should be made use of in praising God by the church, to the end of time.”

It is rational to suppose, that while we essay to pay unto God the tribute of praise and glory, which we owe to him, night and morn in our families, or in public assemblies, on the first day of the week, that we pay it to him in language which he himself devised: Must it not be the most agreeable to the Majesty of Heaven!

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

Historians say, that the English Parliament, having convened about one hundred pious and learned divines, at Westminster, London, to compile a Confession of Faith, Catechisms, Larger and Shorter, Directory for Public and Family Worship, and Form of Presbyterian Church Government, about the year 1643, laid before them an imperfect draught of this Version of the Book of Psalms, made by the pious Sir Francis Rouse, Baronet of Old England, recommending it to their serious examination: who, with laborious and pious care, altered, corrected, and approved it, unanimously, and returned it to Parliament, and both houses also did then approve and authorise it to be sung in families and churches, throughout that kingdom.

The pious and learned Samuel Rutherford, Professor of Divinity in the University of St. Andrews, and the other Scots members of said Westminster Assembly, then sent said authorised Version north to the General Assembly of the national church of Scotland, at that time sitting at Edinburgh, whose committees had it under consideration several years, and having further corrected and amended it, the General Assembly did approve it, and authorise it to be sung in families and churches, as did the Scots Parliament also authorise it throughout that realm.

The great and learned Dr. Ridgley, in his Body of Divinity, page 572, speaking of the Metre Version of the Psalms, says, "That which comes nearest the original, is the New England and Scots, (i. e. the said Assembly's Version) which, I think, says he, is much preferable to the former."

So after near seven years labour and critical care, spent on it by both Assemblies and Parliaments, it may be called the Assemblies' Metre Version of the Book of Psalms; and they have brought it so very close to represent the same ideas of things, the same doctrines, precepts, &c. as the Hebrew Psalms, wrote also in Hebrew Metre, that those who use it may with great propriety be said to praise the Lord with the words of David and Asaph. &c. according to the commandment before cited. 2 Chron. xxix. 30.

II. Another reason why we ought to use the Assembly's Metre Version is, because in using it we *follow the pious example of the flock of Christ*, the saints in scripture, &c. We are commanded to go forth by the footsteps of that happy flock. Cant. i. 8. This is and was their good old way to praise the Lord; we have the laudable example of the pious king, Jehosaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 21. He appointed singers unto the Lord, who, with his army on their march to battle, sung the divine words of David, Ps. cxxxvi. 1, saying, "Praise ye the Lord, for his mercy endureth forever," &c. And when they returned so victorious, to render thanks to God, we have reason to suppose they used the same Psalm Book.

About two hundred years after, when penitent Israel returned from Babylonish captivity, and were laying the foundation of the temple. Ezra iii. 11: "They sung together by course in praising and giving thanks to the Lord," in the words of David. Ps. cxxxvi. 1. "For his mercy endureth forever towards Israel." On both these new occasions they sung no new composures of their own, but the Book of Psalms being completed, they found in it a Psalm that suited them very well, and God accepted them in it, and hath made a record of it, in the volumes of his Book, for our learning and instruction.

In New Testament times, John, the beloved disciple, in divine vision, Rev. xv. 4., saw and heard those who had escaped the strong powers of Antichrist's delusions, praising the Lord with the words of David—Ps. lxxxvi. 9. "All nations whom thou madst shall come and worship before thee." This he saw and heard in the Heaven of the New Testament Church.

Likewise, at the final fall of Antichrist, the New Testament Church, on that new and glorious occasion, sings no new imitation or composition of human device, but sings the words of God's old Book of Psalms. Ps. cxxxiv. 1. "Praise our God all ye that fear him." Nor do we hear of any dullness appearing on their faces, while they confined their songs to the old matter and words of David and Asaph, or other parts of that book known by the common name of the Book of Psalms to the Churches, ever since they were revealed. Luke xx. 42. Acts i. 20.

Historians say, that for the first three hundred years after Christ's incarnation, the Christian churches sung the praises of God in the words of the Book of Psalms, each nation in its own language, till the fourth century, then they would no longer confine their songs to the matter and words of God's devising, in the old Book of Psalms, but new compositions were made, and new benches of Canonic Singers or Cancillators, were set up in their churches. Exorcists and other superstitions were also then invented. Tertullian says, that "after celebrating the Lord's Supper they sung a hymn, either out of the Bible or one of their own composing." It seems reckoning their own hymns as good to use as the Bible ones. Paulus Samosetanus set up some on Easter day, "to sing an hymn to his own praise in the church." Euseb. Lib. 7. page 281. Thus men fond, very fond, of their own new inventions, in religious worship, as they are fond of new fashions of dress, are still set on changes: God says, "Meddle not with them that are given to such changes." The Bible and the histories of past ages, hold up to us many sad spectacles, of men's most egregious and criminal folly, in setting up new modes of worship, which they addressed to God under various pictures, both in his praises and other parts of his worship, perhaps—during eleven hundred and sixty years gross idolatry, for which they were smitten with many terrible judgments, until the Reformation, 1560.

Then our reformer, spirited by God, returned to use a Metre Version of the Book of Psalms, in the praising of God, made by some of the ministers, I suppose, but used no imitations, that I know of, there, from Anno 1560, until November 14th, 1645. That the Assembly's Version was authorised in England, by both Houses of Parliament, as a part of that uniformity in worship, then practised by our pious ancestors; nor could all the powers of hell, nor bloody tyranny of Charles II. and his brother, for twenty-eight years, compel them to recede from the use of this Version of the Psalms, or any other part or that happy system of Reformation in Religion, to which they had attained, and to which they had laudably sworn an adherence by solemn league and covenant. It is said about sixty thousand of them suffered the loss of eleven millions, by fines; many were banished to Holland and America, after wandering long on the mountains; numbers suffered in gaols and dungeons and in fields; and

on scaffolds eighteen thousand suffered—Yet, these pious martyrs, sung this Version through all these dangers, and on the verge of dissolution, with their dying breath and devout joy, and were accepted of God.

The first noble and devout settlers in New England, whose true piety will be dearly esteemed by the religious, to the latest annals of America; they sung this version in their families and churches with heavenly fervour and divine delight. How forbidding then is it for us to neglect or reject this version, where-with our pious ancestors praised the Lord, and found acceptance through the merits of Emanuel.

“Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein and ye shall find rest for your souls; but they said we will not walk therein.” Jer. vi. 16.

III. We ought to use the Assembly’s Version of the Book of Psalms, because *it best suits the various cases of Christian souls in our times*, and is most for edification.

Christian reader, commune with thine own heart awhile, and ask what case it is in, then search this Book of Psalms, and see if thou canst find a sentence in it that suits thy case. Doest thou find by recollection that thy sins are more than thou canst number, and heinous in their nature: That thou art therefore in the utmost danger of eternal fire, and greatly afraid night and day, then read, Ps. xxxviii. 4 Ps. xl. 12. Ps. cxix. 20. The Lord sent unto thee a word of salvation. Ps. 1. 8.

I, for thy sacrifices few, reprove thee never will,
Nor for burnt offerings to have been before me offer’d still.—[Ps. lxxviii. 18.
Thou hast received gifts for men, for such as did rebel;
Yea, even for them, that God the Lord in midst of them might dwell.

Does thy sinful inclinations still grievously prevail against all thy prayers and resolutions, and vows; see Ps. lxxv. 3.

Iniquities, I must confess, prevail against me do,
But as for our transgressions them purge away shalt thou.

Ps. 1. 7.—God, even thy God, I am.

Is thy spiritual willingness and strength for reading, praying, hearing, and keeping the Sabbath, greatly decayed and gone: Is this thy case and thy grief, so it was with David. Ps. xx. 15. cii. 23. See a word of salvation sent to thee. Ps. cx. 4.

A willing people in the day of pow’r shall come to thee;
In holy beauties from morn’s womb, thy youth like dew shall be.
With him mine hand shall ’stablished be,
Mine arm shall make him strong. Ps. lxxxix. 21.

Art thou almost overcome with spiritual deadness in any religious duty, which is a great trouble to thee; see Ps. cxxxviii. 7.

Tho’ I in the midst of trouble walk,
I life from thee shalt have.

Art thou laid sick on a bed of languishing, and got exceedingly weak, see, so far as it tends to the interests of true religion in thy soul, he will perform this promise that suits thy case. Ps. xli. 3.

God will give strength when he in bed of languishing doth mourn,
And in his sickness sore, O Lord; thou all his bed will turn.

Hast thou long prayed for a certain mercy thou standest in

need of, to thyself or to thy friend, and yet there appears no sign of a gracious answer, so that thou fearest greatly God will never regard nor answer thy languid prayers, for that mercy; then read. Ps. xxii. 2.

All day my God to thee, I cry, yet am not heard by thee;
And in the seasons of the night, I cannot silent be. Ps. cii. 17.
Their prayer will he not despise, by him it shall be heard.

Art thou strongly solicited by Satan or by some person, to do what is called a little sin, or a secret sin, or to neglect some particular duty, to the great dishonour of God, and hurt of thy soul; see the promise of Christ to the sinner that looks to him. Ps. lxxxix. 21.

On him the foe shall not exact,
Nor son of mischief wrong.

Is thy soul much grieved because thou seest little or no signs of true piety in any of thy relations, and it often grieves thee; see Ps. xxii. 27.

All ends of the earth remember shall, and turn the Lord unto,
All kindreds of the nations to him shall homage do.

Although thy frugality and industry has been constant, and thy prayers frequent for thy daily bread, yet still thou remainest oppressed in deep poverty; see Ps. lxxii. 12.

The poor man and the indigent in mercy he shall spare;
He shall preserve alive the souls of those that needy are.
For he the needy shall preserve when he to him doth call;
The poor also, and him that hath no help of man at all.

Does thy wonted familiar friend in whom thou trusted, and who did eat of thy bread, now lift up his voice against thee unprovoked, his tongue stabs thy good name as an envenomed dart, behind thy back, perhaps, laying grievous things to thy charge, which thou knowest not; then see Ps. xxxviii. 11. Ps. xli. 8. 9.

Thy way to God commit, him trust, it bring to pass shall he,
And like unto the light he shall thy righteousness display. Ps. xxxvii. 6.
And he thy judgments shall bring forth like noon-tide of the day.

The Book of Psalms is well suited to many other cases, and as Gerhard, an eminent divine, says—They are a glass of divine grace, representing to us the sweet smiling countenance of God in Christ, a most accurate anatomy of a Christian soul, delineating all its afflictions, motions, temptations, and plunges, with their proper remedies.”

The learned Ainsworth, in his preface to it, says—“David, by manifold Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs, sets forth the praises of God—and these his Psalms have ever since by the Church of Israel, by Christ and his Apostles, and by the saints in all ages, been received and honoured as the Oracles of God—Sung in the public assemblies, as in God’s Tabernacle and Temple, where they sung praise unto the Lord, with the words of David and Asaph, the Seer.

And though the Reverend and learned Dr. Watts hath in great mistake, wrote the above reproaches on the Book of Psalms, (I suppose under a fit of temptation) yet I still hope he was a very pious man. His writing on Logick, and some other subjects, will be of permanent advantage to the learned, and would do lasting honour to his name; but the best of men are but men at the best.