

# The Psalms in Worship

A SERIES OF CONVENTION PAPERS BEARING  
UPON THE PLACE OF THE PSALMS IN  
THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH

EDITED BY

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A SPECIAL EXEGESIS OF COL. III. 16 AND EPH. V. 19

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AS even a glance at their contents shows, the Epistle to the Ephesians and that to the Colossians are closely alike. About half of the verses in the former have parallels in the latter, and there are other resemblances as well. This twinship is explained when it is remembered that the two letters were written at the same time and to communities similarly circumstanced. Among the coincidences in thought and language are to be numbered the texts under study, which almost repeat each other.

Turning to these duplicate exhortations, it appears at once that they are of peculiar interest in that they yield a glimpse of the simple worship of primitive days. Their value in this direction is heightened by the fact that one of them is addressed to a plurality of churches, it being now accepted broadly that Ephesians was sent as a circular to Christians in the province of Asia. True, the question has been raised whether they have to do with worship at all, whether Paul is not touching merely upon the intercourse of believers in their family life, at their love-feasts, their social gatherings, and other meetings, and suggesting mutual edification by song. On this mooted point the common verdict is that the main, though not exclusive, reference is to the stated services of the public assembly, which seem to have been of a free and elastic nature. That worship, as well as joint instruction, is in mind is indicated by the concluding words in each citation—"singing with grace in your hearts unto God," "singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord."

With the foregoing inquiry answered, it may be added as beyond doubt that all the resources of the Early Church as regards her treasury of sacred song are embraced in the "psalms

and hymns and spiritual songs" here mentioned. In the three terms the inventory is evidently complete. Here then are classical passages which must be consulted in connection with any investigation into the hymnology of the Apostolic period, passages which have a decisive bearing, therefore, on what compositions may be employed properly in the ordinance of praise.

As to their meaning, there has been pronounced disagreement. The advocates of uninspired songs in worship look on them as strongholds, arguing therefrom that in the age of the Apostles the Psalter was supplemented by new lyrics, and that therefore, as a necessary consequence, the legitimacy of the modern hymn is established. Some writers on this side declare themselves in a very dogmatic way, dismissing lightly the idea of contradiction. On the other hand, it is alleged that there is no cause for supposing that Paul's "hymns and spiritual songs" were anything different from the canonical Psalms, and that there is no license here for the use of other devotional pieces than the Psalms in the worship of God. The latter is the view which will be upheld in this exegesis. It challenges the opposite interpretation as being but a surmise, and offers a series of substantial reasons for its own correctness.

To begin with, it should be realized that present usage as regards the debated terms plays no part in fixing their sense. One can be misled by the seemingly familiar phraseology, and think forthwith of the hard and fast distinction now made between Psalms and hymns. But we are deciphering what was penned in A. D. 61 or 62, long centuries before any of the uninspired productions in the hymnals of to-day were extant. In order, therefore, to make these lines intelligible, we must transport ourselves back into that past to which Paul and his readers belong, and there undertake our exposition with open-mindedness and cautious discrimination.

As an approach toward identifying the poems intended by these designations, there is clear evidence at hand that all of them were divinely inspired, indited under the extraordinary influence

of the Holy Spirit. Preliminary to what is deemed decisive proof, certain considerations which go to make this important claim a strong probability may be adduced.

1. First, in these verses the direction given is not to prepare or provide songs of praise, but only to sing them. On this we must be permitted to insist. But in the absence of an express warrant for so doing, would not these Asia Minor Christians have been chary about writing original hymns for rendition in worship, when the Psalter, written on the mountain-tops of inspiration, and full of the things of God, was everywhere, as is allowed, a congregational handbook? Is it likely that any, self-advised and unaided, would have had the temerity or the desire to attempt such an innovation?

2. Furthermore, had any of Gentile extraction exercised this liberty, would it not have excited strong protest among their Jewish brethren? The first converts to Christianity were generally Jews. These formed the beginnings of the churches in the towns and cities of the Roman Empire, and for a time they must have had prestige and privileged position. They brought with them from the synagogue the highly cherished Psalms, those Psalms which were associated with their holiest traditions, and which were known to have been meet for the Master's use, and thereby doubly consecrated. Clinging to these with an inherited reverence, they must have resented vigorously an uninspired Gentile hymnody. The fact, therefore, that on the subject of praise there is not the slightest echo of discord or controversy in the Apostolic Church, indicates that there was no intrusion of any alien element.

3. Again, it is altogether improbable that hymnists, as measured by even human standards, could be found in the churches of this date. The Gentile members, within whose circle the search is confined, had been but recently rescued from the ignorance and pollution of heathenism, and they had immature, often faulty, understanding of religious doctrine. Their literary capabilities, too, must have been limited, for "not many wise after the flesh,



not many mighty, not many noble, were called." Indeed, the low social status of the early Christians was the standing reproach of hostile critics. All this being true, where are we to find the mellow piety, the spiritual discernment, the education, and the poetic genius and art which must be taken for granted if uninspired songs fit to be named alongside the Psalms are here in mind? Men who deny the genuineness of Ephesians and Colossians allege that the reference is to just such songs, and then proceed to conclude that for this very reason, among others, these Epistles betray themselves as later than the Apostolic era.

4. Moreover, if the Psalms of Scripture are intended by the word "psalms," as is assumed for the present, it is quite unthinkable that Paul would link human compositions with those of the Spirit of God, and direct that they be used for the same end. It is true that in most hymnals the inspired and the uninspired are intermixed, regardless of the chasm in thought and tone which separates them. Occasionally, owing to more conservatism and a finer appreciation of the proprieties, this confusion is modified to the extent that the Psalms are kept together and assigned the first pages. But all of this is neither here nor there. We are interpreting Paul, and he had exact conceptions of inspiration. It was he who distinguished the Old Testament writings, inclusive of the Psalter, as "God-breathed" literature, clothed with inviolable sanctity.<sup>1</sup> It was he who described himself, an Apostle of the New Covenant, as receiving truth by divine revelation, and as giving it utterance "not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth."<sup>2</sup> It seems incredible, therefore, that in this instance he should trample upon a distinction which elsewhere he guards jealously and put uninspired songs in competition with those inspired as having equal teaching worth.

What has been noticed thus far affords cogent grounds for the belief that the hymns and spiritual songs of our passages were all of inspired quality. The crowning demonstration of this, however, lies in the descriptive term, "spiritual." It matters nothing

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 13.

ing in the argument whether this adjective is taken as limiting each of the preceding words or not. There are those who think that it extends to the "psalms" and "hymns," an opinion which is not out of harmony with Greek syntax.<sup>3</sup> But, of course, there is no rule demanding this, and on the other hand, as will appear later, there is sufficient reason for restricting "spiritual" to "songs" alone. At the same time it reflects character on all the compositions of praise here specified. The three words may be synonyms, as we prefer to think, or it may be said with Meyer that the spiritual songs are the genus, of which the psalms and hymns are the species, or "spiritual songs" may denote the lowest class of a triple category. In any event, when the phrase "spiritual" is defined, it is certain that the "psalms" and "hymns," no less than the "songs," are duly characterized.

Now what is the import of the word? In answer to this pivotal question we affirm that the Greek original, which is *πνευματικός*, has no such latitude of meaning as "spiritual" has in English, and that it designates commonly whatever is immediately given or produced by the Spirit of God. It is construed thus by an overwhelming majority of critical authorities, including those of the greatest weight. A few special citations will not be amiss. Dr. Warfield, of Princeton, writes thus in *The Presbyterian Review*<sup>4</sup>: "Of the twenty-five instances in which the word occurs in the New Testament, in no single case does it sink even as low in its reference as the human spirit; and in twenty-four of them is derived from *πνεῦμα*, the Holy Ghost. In this sense of *belonging to, or determined by, the Holy Spirit*, the New Testament usage is uniform with the one single exception of Eph. vi. 12, where it seems to refer to the higher, though fallen, superhuman intelligences. The appropriate translation for it in each

<sup>3</sup> So Hofmann, Soden, Koppe, Rosenmüller, Walter Lowrie, and James Dick (Belfast). T. K. Abbott, in *The International Critical Commentary*, leaves the question open. Under this view the position of the adjective is looked upon as determining its form. While qualifying each substantive, it takes the nearest gender.

<sup>4</sup> July number of 1880.

case is Spirit-given, or Spirit-led, or Spirit-determined." In *The Expositor* <sup>5</sup> Dr. Warfield repeats himself substantially, and adds that this interpretation "is gradually becoming recognized by the best expositors." Dr. Laidlaw, of the United Free Church College, Edinburgh, treating the term in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, says that "everything *πνευματικόν*, spiritual, is a divine product or creation." Eadie, in his Commentary on Ephesians, <sup>6</sup> remarks that *πνευματικός* means "produced by or belonging to the Holy Spirit," and adds that this is "the ruling sense of the epithet in the New Testament." Dr. Charles Hodge, in his Commentary on First Corinthians, <sup>7</sup> says: "One of the most common meanings of the word *spiritual* in Scripture is *derived from the Spirit*. Spiritual gifts and spiritual blessings are gifts and blessings of which the Spirit is the author." The same position is maintained by such New Testament lexicographers as Cremer, Parkhurst, Robinson, and Thayer, and it is advocated in McClintock and Strong's Encyclopedia.

Among others who comment on the word *πνευματικός* as it is found elsewhere in the New Testament and advance the meaning given are Barnes, Chalmers, Denney, Farrar, Fausset, Frommüller (Lange Commentary), Gifford, Godet, Gore, Hort, Kling (Lange Commentary), Moule, Neander, Olshausen, Sanday, Schmiedel, Stanley, Moses Stuart, and Marvin R. Vincent. Coming to authorities on the passages under review, many of the more eminent and scholarly sustain the same exegesis and account these "spiritual songs" as inspired, "the productions of the Holy Ghost in the department of poetry." See the New Testament lexicons by Cremer, by Robinson, and by Thayer. From commentators on Colossians or Ephesians we cite Alford, Beet, Braune (Lange Commentary), Cheyne, Cone, Dale, Eadie, Elliott, Findlay, Maclaren, Meyer, Riddle, Salmond, and Tholuck. Hodge and Barnes are not included in this last list, and their adverse interpretation furnishes an instructive warning of how

<sup>5</sup> Third Series, Vol. 4, p. 137.

<sup>6</sup> See comment on Eph. i. 3.

<sup>7</sup> See comment on 1 Cor. x. 3.



expositors may be swayed by personal inclination and practice. Dealing with the term in Eph. v. 19, Hodge writes thus: "This may mean either *inspired, i. e.*, derived from the Spirit; or expressing spiritual thoughts and feelings. This latter is the more probable." And yet in every instance, except this one, in which *πνευματικός* occurs in the New Testament Books on which he has commented, Hodge holds stoutly to the other idea of the word, and even here he is constrained to admit it as applicable. Barnes is guilty of the same fault.

The sum of our finding thus far is, first, that there is a body of strong presumptive evidence for the inspiration of Paul's "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," and, second, that the adjective *πνευματικός* lifts them to this high level beyond peradventure, stamping them as written by poetically gifted men under the extraordinary impulse and guidance of the Holy Spirit. In keeping with such a conclusion is the following from an editorial in the *North British Review*, of Edinburgh: "It is probable that, while the miraculous influences of the Spirit continued upon earth, no uninspired songs were admitted into the public or private devotions of Christians."<sup>8</sup> Even if we went no farther it would appear, and we so assert, that in Eph. v. 19 and Col. iii. 16 there is not a scintilla of warrant for the use of humanly composed lyrics in worship. Though other inspired odes than those in the Book of Psalms should be countenanced in these passages, it were a bewildering feat of inference that would legalize therefrom the multitudinous hymnology of to-day, for this has been wrought out at the discretion, and according to the wisdom, of fallible men. Authorization for such an uninspired hymnology is imperatively required, but they labor in vain who seek it here.

To overcome this objection there are some of our hymn-singing brethren who claim that a hymn penned by a good man and embodying evangelical sentiment may be rated as "inspired." Thus Dr. R. McCheyne Edgar, of Dublin, wrote recently: "His [the Holy Spirit's] inspirations were not exhausted when the Canon was complete; and if He inspires prayers which have never

<sup>8</sup> Vol. xxvii. p. 195.

been embodied in any prayer-book, canonical or otherwise, is it not reasonable to believe that He has likewise inspired the poets who have devoted themselves to sacred song, although their 'spiritual songs' never could be placed in the Canon?"<sup>9</sup> Such a contention leads to the most perilous consequences, hiding a lurking, though an unconscious, infidelity. It strikes at the Scriptural doctrine of inspiration, confusing it with spiritual illumination, just as was done by Schleiermacher and his school. Inconsistent, as it is, with the faith of the Church universal, which has always made a marked distinction between the writings of inspired men and those of ordinary believers, it merits nothing but censure.

Estimating these "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" as all inspired, several conjectures remain open. The first is that Paul, having in mind the strange exaltation which pervaded the Apostolic Church, alludes to new miraculous songs improvised on the spur of the moment by those in a condition of inspired ecstasy; *i. e.*, he alludes to a rhythmic form of the gift of tongues. This theory has no foundation, because

1. A store of existing lyrics is presupposed in the language of these passages. Evidently Paul enjoins his readers to sing what was then accessible, and does not intimate unknown, non-existent odes, yet to be extemporized. Moreover, the "psalms" referred to were in existence, and the drunken songs of heathen feasts which stand in antithesis in one of the contexts (Eph. v. 18) were ready-made. Why not these "hymns and spiritual songs" also?

2. There is no proof that lyrical endowments were among the grace-gifts, the charismatic activities, of the Pauline churches.

3. Paul said of the gift of tongues that it did not edify the Church except under certain limitations,<sup>10</sup> and, therefore, so far as instruction was concerned, he must have depreciated kindred outbursts of feeling voiced in song. Here, however, he urges what is of prime value for teaching and admonition.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Progressive Presbyterianism*, p. 144.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 1-33.

<sup>11</sup> Col. iii. 16.

Since ecstatic impromptus are not to be thought of, let us turn to another theory, viz., that inspired songs original to the age and prepared for general use by the Apostles or other supernaturally gifted men are referred to. This also is baseless and untenable.

1. There is no recorded divine commission in the New Testament constituting hymnists, nor is there any promised help of the Holy Spirit in a lyrical direction.

2. Among the diversities of gifts bestowed in rich measure at the outset of the present dispensation there is no mention of that of sacred poesy, and yet in Old Testament times hymn-making was just such a gift.

3. There is unbroken silence in the New Testament regarding the actual making of such odes. The formation of an inspired hymnology was a most important occurrence in the former economy, so that it is signalized in the Old Testament. We might reasonably expect, therefore, that there would have been some hint at least of a similar phenomenon in the Apostolic Church, and the more because the long-standing ordinance of Psalmody would have been altered thereby.

4. Not one such hymn, nor yet a single authentic vestige of one, has been preserved. There are no canticles in the Third Gospel, though hasty writers speak of the "Hymns of the Nativity." The songs of the Apocalypse are not quotations from a hymn-book, but integral parts of the Apocalypse itself; they belong to the visions which John saw as he was swept away into the heavens. The assertion that there are hymnic fragments scattered over the New Testament rests on sheer conjecture, a little euphonious Greek being all that can be cited.<sup>12</sup> Of an

<sup>12</sup> Dean Howson, commenting on the conjecture that a certain passage in Romans is a lyric quotation, says: "The fact that the passage can be broken up into a system of irregular lines, consisting of dochmiac and choriambic feet, proves nothing; because there is scarcely any passage in Greek prose which might not be resolved into lyrical poetry by a similar method; just as, in English, the columns of a newspaper may be read off as hexameters (spondaic, or otherwise), quite as good as most of the so-called English hexameters which are published." *Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, by Conybeare and Howson, Vol. i., p. 195.

alleged Apostolic hymnody a recent critic so competent as Eduard Reuss, of Strasburg, has said that it "cannot be proved from the doubtful traces which have been adduced as evidence therefor."<sup>13</sup> There being no relics of an Apostolic hymnody extant, the presumption is strong that there never was such a hymnody. Had extra-Psalmodic hymns and songs of inspired origin been current in the early Church, they could not all have perished.

5. As Cheyne states in *The Encyclopedia Biblica*,<sup>14</sup> the language of Paul presupposes a stock of songs which were known by heart and easily rose to the lips. Is it supposable that within a generation after the death of Christ a collection of Apostolic odes coördinate with the Psalms had crystallized into shape, and that these were familiarly known in the churches of Asia Minor, which were less than ten years old?

Reviewing the argument, surely it may be held as a moral certainty that in the infant Church of the New Testament there was no creation of inspired hymns for social worship. Even though, however, the opposite was admitted, the fact must still be faced that such productions were short-lived and are lost beyond recall. The matter, therefore, would remain precisely the same as to us, for no human composesures can replace what were "God-breathed."

The ground is now cleared for insisting that the praise-songs of these twin passages are those of the Psalter alone. As a counterpart to the interpretations which have been negatived, it is susceptible of absolute demonstration that the three terms were applied to the Psalms of Scripture long before Paul wrote, and that this usage was universally prevalent in the Church of his day. For the proof of this we rely chiefly upon the Septuagint. The Jews of the Dispersion, not only in Egypt, but in Western Asia and Europe, spoke Greek habitually. During the third and second centuries B. C. there was made in their interest the Greek

<sup>13</sup> History of the New Testament, Vol. i., p. 162.

<sup>14</sup> Article on *Hymns*.



Version of the Old Testament styled the Septuagint (LXX.), so called from the legend that it was executed by seventy translators. Its use spread rapidly, and at the dawn of the Christian era all Hellenistic Jews read their Bible through this medium. Philo of Alexandria, the best representative of the Hellenist, depended wholly upon the Septuagint, and Josephus, himself a Palestinian Jew, cites it more than he does the Hebrew. Accordingly, the heralds of the gospel found this Version ready to their hand, and it went with them wherever Greek was understood. Just as the New Testament was written in Greek for Greek-speaking peoples, so the Old Testament, the only Scriptures of the early Apostolic period, was circulated through the Church in the Greek dress of the Septuagint. That the Apostles were well acquainted with this translation and commonly used it is shown in that two-thirds of their Old Testament quotations are from its pages. Turning to the recipients of these letters, it is granted that the Christians in Asia Minor were predominantly Gentile, and yet, as Ramsay has proved,<sup>15</sup> Jews were numerous in this region, particularly in the Græco-Asiatic cities, and the Book of the Acts makes it plain that they and their proselytes were the nuclei of the churches there planted.<sup>16</sup> This alone guarantees that the Septuagint was in ordinary use in these communities. And even though a Jewish element is shut out from the reckoning, the Gentile Christians at Ephesus, Colossæ, and elsewhere could have read the Scriptures in that Version only which was in general currency, and which had received Apostolic sanction. It follows that the Psalter-songs, which, it is almost unanimously admitted, were an integral part of their worship, and which were chanted to their Greek music, must have been from the translation of the Seventy.

Consulting this great Version, the most cursory reader will find, first, that there is a steady recurrence of these three desig-

<sup>15</sup> See *The Church in the Roman Empire* and *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*.

<sup>16</sup> See Acts xiii. 14, xiv. 1, xvi. 1, 3, xix. 8, 10.



nations, "psalms," "hymns," and "songs," in the formal titles to the compositions of the Psalter; second, that the terms "hymns" and "songs," with their related verbs, occur again and again in the text or body of the Psalms; and, third, that the same terms are employed frequently in the historical Books, both canonical and apocryphal, with reference to the Psalter. Besides the caption of the entire Psalter, which is "Psalms" (*ψαλμοί*), it is well known that most of these inspired odes have headlines of their own. In sixty-seven of these the word "psalm" (*ψαλμός*) appears,<sup>17</sup> in six the word "hymn" (*ὕμνος*),<sup>18</sup> and in thirty-five the word "song" (*ὠδή*),<sup>19</sup> the same Greek words used in the passages before us. Still further: "psalm" and "song" are conjoined twelve times,<sup>20</sup> and "psalm" and "hymn" twice.<sup>21</sup> In the heading of the Seventy-Sixth Psalm all three terms stand side by side, just as here, and the heading of the Sixty-Fifth Psalm contains "psalm" and "song," while in the first verse the composition is spoken of as a "hymn." It is noteworthy also in these compound inscriptions that our terms interchange easily, and that "hymn" is written repeatedly in the plural, suggesting that in the estimation of the Seventy it was applicable to all the poems of the Psalter. There are such various phrasings as "a psalm of a song," "a song of a psalm," "a psalm, a song," "in

<sup>17</sup> Viz., Psalms i., iv., v., vi., vii., viii., ix., xi., xii., xiii., xiv., xv., xix., xx., xxi., xxii., xxiii., xxiv., xxv., xxix., xxx., xxxi., xxxviii., xl., xli., xliii., xlv., xlvi., xlvii., xlviii., xlix., l., li., lxii., lxiii., lxiv., lxv., lxvi., lxvii., lxviii., lxxiii., lxxv., lxxvi., lxxvii., lxxix., lxxx., lxxxii., lxxxiii., lxxxiv., lxxxv., lxxxvii., lxxxviii., xcii., xciv., xcvi., xcix., c., ci., cviii., cix., cx., cxxxviii., cxxxix., cxl., cxli., cxliii. All numberings of the Psalms are those of the English Version, not of the LXX.

<sup>18</sup> Psalms vi., liv., lv., lxi., lxvii., lxxvi.

<sup>19</sup> Psalms iv., xviii., xxx., xxxix., xlv., xlvi., lxviii., lxv., lxvi., lxviii., lxxv., lxxvi., lxxxiii., lxxxvii., lxxxviii., xci., xcii., xciii., xciv., xcvi., cviii., cxx., cxxi., cxxii., cxxiii., cxxiv., cxxv., cxxvi., cxxvii., cxxviii., cxxix., cxxx., cxxxii., cxxxiii., cxxxiv.

<sup>20</sup> Psalms iv., xxx., xlvi., lxviii., lxxv., lxxxiii., lxxxvii., lxxxviii., xcii., cviii.

<sup>21</sup> Psalms vi. and lxvii.

psalms a song," "in hymns a psalm," "in hymns, a psalm, a song."

Turning from the titles of the Greek Psalter, the terms "hymn" and "song," with their cognate verbs and substantives, are interspersed freely through the text as well of its odes, being descriptive of these compositions.<sup>22</sup> Three citations out of sixteen will suffice. The Fortieth Psalm, third verse, runs: "He put into my mouth a new lay, a hymn (*ὕμνον*) to our God." At the close of the Seventy-Second Psalm there is the line, "The hymns (*οἱ ὕμνοι*) of David, the son of Jesse, are ended." This colophon may apply to the entire preceding collection, Psalms i. and lxxii. inclusive, as Perowne contends, or it may have been attached to some group of Davidic Psalms incorporated in the Psalter. In either case it shows that the LXX. translators comprehended Psalms indiscriminately and collectively under the name "hymns" (*ὕμνοι*). Again, in Psalm cxxxvii. 3 we read: "There they who took us captive demanded of us words of songs (*ᾠδῶν*), and they who led us away said, Chant us a hymn (*ὕμνον*) out of the songs (*ἐκ τῶν ᾠδῶν*) of Zion." Here the word "songs" (*ᾠδαί*) covers all the Psalms, and a "hymn" may be selected at random from these "songs."

When we pass from the Psalms themselves to the historical Books of the Septuagint, the terminology is identical. In 2 Samuel, 1 Chron., 2 Chron., and Nehemiah there are sixteen instances of this, and in them the Psalms as a plurality are called "hymns" (*ὕμνοι*) or "songs" (*ᾠδαί*) indifferently, and the singing of them is called "hymning" (*ὕμνέω, ὑμνωδέω, ὑμνησις*).<sup>23</sup> In the Apocryphal Books of the Septuagint, likewise, sometimes considered an appendage to the Old Testament, sometimes a part of it, the same sustained usage catches the eye at least ten times, as will be seen by examining The Wisdom of Jesus, the

<sup>22</sup> See Psalms ix. 16, xxii. 22, xl. 3, lxv. 1, lxix. 30, lxxi. 6, 8, lxxii. 20, xcii. 1-3, c. 4, cxviii. 14, cxix. 171, cxxxvii. 3, 4, cxliv. 9, cxlviii. 14.

<sup>23</sup> See 2 Samuel vi. 5, xxii. 1, 2, 1 Chron. xv. 22, xvi. 42, xxv. 6, 2 Chron. v. 13, vii. 6, xxiii. 13, 18, xxix. 30, xxxiv. 12, Neh. xii. 24, 27, 36, 46.

Son of Sirach, or Ecclesiasticus, and the First and Second Books of Maccabees.<sup>24</sup>

This then is the multiplied and cumulative witness of the Septuagint, Paul's Bible and the Bible of the Asia Minor churches. Does it not point indubitably to the conclusion that the Apostle intends nothing but the Greek Psalter when he employs the three denominations it had worn so long, and which would recur readily to every mind? And here it is worth while to observe again his injunction. He does not tell those addressed to make psalms, hymns, and songs, but to use such as they had, and with which they are assumed to be conversant. And what were these? What in the circumstances could they have been, in the thought of either the writer or the readers, but that divine system of lyrics known by these three ancient titles, and which, so far as history reveals, was the only compilation of sacred songs known by any name? Let it be supposed that the Book of Psalms alone had been used in the Christian Church up to the present, that it had taken root in the affections of the people, and that in the Authorized Version of the Bible and the popular praise-manuals its one hundred and fifty odes were styled psalms, hymns, and songs. Suppose next that a pastoral letter was dispatched to our congregations, advising the people to let the word of Christ dwell in them richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. What would be understood by the exhortation? The question answers itself. But these were precisely the conditions among the churches of Asia Minor. According to the principles of historical criticism, therefore, the evidence is ample and decisive that these passages reproduce the technical Psalter designations of the Septuagint.

As against successful dissent, notice that authorities are practically unanimous that in the first of the three words the Psalter

<sup>24</sup> See Eccus. xlvi. 8, li. 11, 1 Macc. iv. 24, 33, 54, xiii. 51, 2 Macc. i. 30, x. 7, 38, xii. 37.

is referred to, either exclusively or chiefly.<sup>25</sup> Reuss and others count it inconceivable that the word "psalm" (*ψαλμός*) should have a wider sense anywhere in the New Testament.<sup>26</sup> It being settled then that the Apostle in penning the word "psalm" had definitely before him the Psalter in its Greek dress, how is it possible to deny fairly that the terms which he conjoins with "psalms" are limited to that customary application of them to the Psalter which is testified to by the Septuagint? In such a grouping, coördinated with "psalms," and without any new use of them being hinted, how could they have been diverted from their stereotyped meaning?

Our position, already well fortified, receives striking confirmation outside the Alexandrian Version. Philo, the learned Jewish philosopher, writing during our Lord's life and immediately after (died A. D. 40), never once uses the word "psalm" (*ψαλμός*) or its compounds in connection with his many quotations from the Psalter, but always "hymn" (*ὕμνος*) or one of its compounds.<sup>27</sup> This leads Cheyne to surmise that Alexandria had a special edition of the Greek Psalter with "hymns" (*ὕμνοι*) as its running title,<sup>28</sup> while Edwin Hatch accounts for Philo's practice on the theory that "hymns" (*ὕμνοι*) was the older designation of the Psalms.<sup>29</sup> Flavius Josephus, the celebrated historian, who represents Jewish Hellenistic literature in the gen-

<sup>25</sup> So Dr. Alexander, Bishop of Derry, Bloomfield, Eadie, Hodge, Lathrop, Lightfoot, Maclaren, Oehler, Olshausen, Reuss, Salmond, Stier, Tholuck, and most commentators.

<sup>26</sup> At 1 Cor. xiv. 26 some find in *ψαλμός* a reference to an improvised effusion of an inspired character; but writers like Binnie, Trench, and Reuss oppose this, and make the usage of the word absolute. The latter position is maintained also in the Encyclopædia Britannica (article on *Hymns*), and by Graham in his Commentary on Ephesians.

<sup>27</sup> See *Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis*, 16 (i.284); *De Agricultura*, 12 (i.308); *De Plantatione Noe*, 7 (i.335); *De Confusione Linguarum*, 11 (i.410); *De Migratione Abrahami*, 28 (i.460); *De Profugis*, 11 (i.555); *De Mutatione Nominum*, 20 (i.596); *De Somniis*, Book i.13 (i.632) and Book ii.37 (i.690).

<sup>28</sup> *Bampton Lectures* for 1889, p. 12.

<sup>29</sup> *Essays in Biblical Greek*, p. 174.



eration which followed Philo, tells how "David composed songs ( $\psi\delta\delta\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ ) and hymns ( $\theta\upsilon\mu\omicron\nu\varsigma$ )" and alludes repeatedly to the Psalms as "hymns."<sup>30</sup> The New Testament itself, elsewhere than in these passages in Ephesians and Colossians, agrees unmistakably in the same witness. In Matt. xxvi. 30 and Mk. xiv. 26 it is recorded that after the institution of the Supper our Lord and His Apostles "hymned" or "sung an hymn" ( $\delta\mu\eta\sigma\alpha\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma$ ). All grant that what Jesus is thus described as singing on that sad night was the second part of the Passover Hallel, Psalms cxv. and cxviii. inclusive, and yet the Evangelists call this the "singing of hymns."<sup>31</sup> Let it be noted that these Gospels echo the established habit of the Church at the time when they were written,<sup>32</sup> and that they and our two Epistles belong to the same decade.

And now, massing what has been gleaned from the Septuagint, from the eminent Hellenistic authors named, and from the New Testament itself, it is indisputable that during Apostolic days, in both Jewish and Christian circles, it was the custom to refer to the lyrics of the Psalter as "psalms," "hymns," or "songs" indifferently. So fixed, indeed, was this that it persisted in the early Greek fathers and in the second-century Greek versions of the Old Testament, that of Aquila, that of Theodotion, and that of Symmachus.

According to the interpretation of these passages here upheld, the different terms are taken as synonyms. This is certainly true in the Septuagint, where "psalm," "hymn," and "song" interchange promiscuously, where in fact the same Hebrew noun is translated "hymn" and "psalm,"<sup>33</sup> and where, in the plural as

<sup>30</sup> *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book vii. chap. 12, sec. 3; Book xi. chap. 3, sec. 8; chap. 4, sec. 2; chap. 9, sec. 6.

<sup>31</sup> They use the participle of  $\delta\mu\eta\lambda\omega$ , a verb correlative with  $\theta\upsilon\mu\omicron\nu\varsigma$ .

<sup>32</sup> The coincidence of the two Gospels in the use of  $\delta\mu\eta\sigma\alpha\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma$  proves this.

<sup>33</sup> The word *Neginoth* is rendered "hymns" in the inscriptions of Psalms vi., liv., lv., lxi., lxvii., and lxxvi., while in the inscription of Psalm iv. it is rendered "psalms."



here, each word is an appellation for the whole Psalter. Even some who do not find in these New Testament terms an exclusive reference to the Psalter appreciate that they are synonymous, though the admission is damaging because of the generally accepted signification of "psalm" (*ψαλμός*).<sup>34</sup> That the poems of the Psalter answer in reality to each one of these terms is patent. As Dr. J. Addison Alexander said of them, "They are all not only poetical, but lyrical, *i. e.*, songs, poems intended to be sung."<sup>35</sup> They are psalms also, for their original rendition was with instrumental accompaniment.<sup>36</sup> And they are hymns in that they are intrinsically religious, embodying adoration, thanksgiving, confession, and supplication to God. So pronounced is their hymnic character that they have received the designation of "hymns" continuously from the first. The old Hebrew name of the Psalter, that of the Rabbins and subsequently that of the Talmud, was *Sepher Tehillim*,<sup>37</sup> "Book of Praises," or, as it might be paraphrased, "Hymn-Book." Then comes the early Greek usage, Biblical and extra-Biblical, already rehearsed. Succeeding centuries maintain the practice, as is seen in the Apostolical Constitutions and in the works of such Fathers as Justin Martyr, Hippolytus, Eusebius, Hilary, Athanasius, Jerome, Augustine, and Cassian. Testimonies from the Middle Ages might be multiplied at great length, but Bede, "the Venerable," gives their gist when he speaks of the whole Psalter as called "Liber Hymnorum" by universal consent. Thereafter, through the Reformation period and down to modern times, the Psalms are spoken of incessantly as hymns. And to-day, in spite of the popular cleavage between psalms and hymns, all our dictionaries, such as Webster, the Century, and the Standard, identify the

<sup>34</sup> Lightfoot, on Col. iii. 16, says: "It is quite possible for the same song to be at once *ψαλμός*, *ᾠμος*, and *ᾠδὴ*." Orello Cone says that these "three terms are essentially synonymous, and the slight shades of meaning between them are not easily definable."

<sup>35</sup> Introduction to Commentary on Psalms.

<sup>36</sup> *Ψαλμός* is from *ψάλλειν*, to play on a stringed instrument.

<sup>37</sup> From *Tehillah*, praise, song of praise.

psalms as hymns, scholarly writers<sup>38</sup> describe the Psalter as "a hymnal," "the hymn-book of the Second Temple," or "the hymn-book of the Reformed Churches," and Psalms are stitched into collections of human compositions and labeled "hymns" with the rest.

Against the ascribing of these three terms to the Psalter it is urged that "songs" (*ᾠδαί*) has an attributive in the word "spiritual" (*πνευματικαί*) which is novel, and which forbids dependence on the Septuagint in the exegesis of these passages. It is not "psalms, hymns, and songs," we are told, but "psalms, hymns, and *spiritual* songs." The objection is plausible, but it shrinks to the vanishing point and becomes a verbal quibble when the context in Ephesians is noted. The Greeks, the Asiatic Greeks particularly, were devoted to music. Song and jest, stimulated by the wine-cup, were the entertainment of the social hour, and often these were coarse and wanton. Their very religious festivals included the orgies of Bacchus and Venus, where vile phallic songs were a feature. In contrast with this wicked revelry Paul tells his readers to enliven their gatherings with the joy which the Spirit of God imparts, and to express themselves in songs which He has inspired. The answer, therefore, to the objection raised is that, while the terms "psalms" and "hymns" were marked out as consecrated, the term "songs" had become peculiarly besmirched in heathen parlance, and the Apostle adds the word "spiritual" to differentiate Christian song from all else and brand the opposite, which he has in mind, as earthly, sensual, and devilish.<sup>39</sup>

With the occasion of the word "spiritual" cleared up, it is submitted that the propriety of its application to the Psalms cannot be gainsaid. That they are the fruit of the inspiration of God, hailing from men energized by the Holy Spirit, is reiterated in Scripture,<sup>40</sup> and is evinced in the treatment accorded them by our

<sup>38</sup> Such as Ewald, Stanley, and Robertson Smith.

<sup>39</sup> Chrysostom opposes to this *αἱ σατανικαὶ ᾠδαί*, "Satanic songs."

<sup>40</sup> 2 Sam. xxiii. 2, Mt. xxii. 43, Mk. xii. 36, Acts i. 16, iv. 25, Heb. iv. 7, v. 5, 6.

Lord and His Apostles. In truth, their inspiration is perceptible, tangible. The Book carries on its front the divine image and superscription, and it is not exaggeration to say that it is the most conspicuous product of the Spirit in the bounds of the Canon. Here we abandon the defensive, and contend that this praise volume is absolutely unique in that of its lyrics alone can it be predicated that they are "pneumatic," or "spiritual," songs. Among existing hymnals there is not another in all the world which contains such songs, except as they have borrowed from the Psalter.

Again, it has been asked, Is not this triple enumeration redundant if the Psalter is made the only reference in the three terms? Why such multiplication of titles? In reply, note:

1. If there is any difficulty here, it is reduced but little by those who oppose us in the interpretation of these passages. They do not find three kinds of praise, as consistently they should do, but they stop with a twofold classification, for notwithstanding all attempts there has been failure in distinguishing "hymns" and "spiritual songs." They are able to isolate the "psalms" by themselves, but the "hymns" and "spiritual songs" remain fused and confused. As between unifying the reference of two terms and that of three, the difference is not great. If there is tautology in the one case, there is also in the other.

2. It is common in Scripture to call the same thing by different names in close connection, this in order to give a fuller and more emphatic description of it by specifying its various aspects. Paul himself resorts frequently to such cumulations.<sup>41</sup>

3. As a matter of fact, Paul's Psalter gave the Psalms these very titles, sometimes in combinations, and twice in the triple combination of these verses.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> See Ex. xxxiv. 7, Lev. xvi. 21, 1 Kg. vi. 12, 1 Chron. xxix. 19, Ps. xix. 7, 8, Ps. cxix. throughout, 2 Cor. xii. 12, Col. i. 9, 2 Thess. ii. 9, 1 Tim. ii. 1, Heb. ii. 4.

<sup>42</sup> Psalms lxxv. and lxxvi., already noticed. The only other real titles in the Greek Psalter are Ἀλληλοῦδία (*Hallelujah*) and Πρὸςευχή (*Prayer*). The first is an interjection or exclamation, and is found eighteen times

4. These precepts in Ephesians and Colossians have a lively and urgent context, and it is in keeping with this to suppose that their heaping of terms is, as Dr. S. D. F. Salmond says, with a view to rhetorical force.

Another objection advanced against our interpretation is, that had the Book of Psalms been meant exclusively, the definite article would have been prefixed to the three words. This article-argument is quickly met.

1. In the Greek Psalter itself the article is not used in connection with any one of these three titles, not even with the prefatory *ψαλμοί*.

2. Paul may have meant the words to be taken qualitatively. This is favored in Ephesians, where there is a tacit contrast with bacchanalian songs.

3. In New Testament Greek, as well as in classical, the article is often omitted before appellatives which denote a well-known object,<sup>43</sup> and it has been demonstrated already that these three titles were attached to a historical system of praise well known to the Apostles and the Asiatic churches.

Our exegesis of these passages now nears completion, but it must still be verified as satisfying the demands of the double context. Consider, first, the relation in the Colossian passage between the indwelling of "the word of Christ" and the singing of "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Whether such singing is to be reckoned as the mode of imparting "the word of Christ," or as the outcome of its indwelling, is immaterial at the present, for in any event the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs spoken of must be in unison with "the word of Christ," and contain it. As to the phrase, "the word of Christ," occurring here only, a documentary or literary conception of it is improbable. Let it be taken generally as the teaching of Christ, the body of truth

—Psalms cv., cvi., cvii., cxi., cxii., cxiii., cxiv., cxvi., cxvii., cxviii., cxix., cxxxv., cxxxvi., cxlvi., cxlvii., cxlviii., cxlix., cl. The second is attached to five Psalms—xvii., lxxxvi., xc., cii., cxlii.

<sup>43</sup> See Winer's New Testament Grammar, Seventh Edition, Sec. 19.



by which men are made wise unto salvation, and furnished completely unto every good work. And now, we ask, does not the Psalter gleam and glow with the saving doctrines of Christianity? Does it not, beyond the four Gospels, reveal "the mind which was in Christ Jesus"? Were the rest of the Bible destroyed, would it not preserve an exposition of the way of life sufficiently clear to save a fallen race? Is it not a true instinct which has led publishers to bind up the Psalter with the New Testament as being manifestly of kindred nature? It was Augustine, the illustrious Latin Father, who said that "the voice of Christ and His Church was well-nigh the only voice to be heard in the Psalms." Bengel spoke of the Psalter as "a remarkable portion of the Scriptures, in which the subject of Christ and His Kingdom is most copiously discussed." More recently, Franz Delitzsch, the great German exegete and Hebraist, wrote: "There is no essential New Testament-truth not contained in the Psalms." These testimonies will stand. Christ faced Himself in the Psalter; nor did He "see in a mirror, darkly"; and His Apostles, judging by the scores of their quotations, found in its odes the Messianic and evangelical element in abounding measure. The Psalter reference in these three terms conforms, therefore, to the requirements of the context, so far as concerns the phrase, "the word of Christ." Can the same be said of any rival reference? Can any pleader for uninspired hymnody maintain that in it there is a comprehensive presentation of "the word of Christ" equal to that in the Book of Psalms? It was none less than Dr. James H. Brookes, of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, who said a few years ago:<sup>44</sup> "It is difficult in any ordinary hymn-book to find a dozen hymns that are in accord with the word of Christ."

Once more. By these psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs the Colossian Christians are told to "teach and admonish one another." But since it is the usual manner of the Apostle to refer his readers to Scripture for instruction and admonition, and since

<sup>44</sup> In the magazine entitled *Truth*.



for these ends he draws heavily upon the Psalms in his Epistles, the divine praise-book is suggested at once as his only thought. Certainly, it is hymns of a definitely dogmatic, instructional type which are presupposed. And it is just here, in preceptive power and in doctrinal substance, that the Psalter hymns tower splendidly above all others. The Psalter may be religion, and not theology, as it is sometimes put, but nevertheless it has a thoroughly didactic character that is unapproached and unapproachable by lyrics uninspired.

Thirdly. In Ephesians the "speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" is the sequel of being "filled with the Spirit." Instead of the excitement of strong drink, be God-intoxicated through the infilling of the Spirit, and give vent to your joyous emotions in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. So runs the exhortation. Here again, how exactly the Bible songs correspond to such a connection. Receive the fullness of the Spirit, and then pour out your souls in the hymns of the Psalter, indited as they all are by the Spirit and redolent of His holy inspiration. The *Pneuma* and His own *pneumatic* psalm: what God hath joined together in this passage let not man put asunder.

The last clause in each passage is worthy of a moment's notice. In Colossians, according to the revised text, the singing was to be "unto God" as the Object and Auditor of praise, not to Christ distinctively and exclusively. This, as all are aware, is emphatically true of the Psalms, which, though full of Christ, and specializing Him over and over again, do not forget His organic unity with God in the essence of the Divine Being. The parallel in Ephesians reads "to the Lord"; yet there, too, as verse 20 shows, Christ is looked upon as the Mediator through Whom the sacrifice of praise is offered to Him Who is the ultimate source of blessing, "God, even the Father."

Summarizing the results of our exegesis, it has been determined:—

- i. That the "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" of these

passages included nothing that was uninspired, nor any compositions newly inspired in the Apostolic Age.

2. That they are all embraced in the Book of Psalms, this finding being based upon the impregnable testimony of the Greek Bible and Psalter used by Paul and the Pauline churches, upon the usage of contemporary Hellenistic writers, upon the witness of the Gospels according to Matthew and Mark, upon the conformity of the Psalter to this threefold characterization, and upon the fact that an exclusive reference to the Psalms satisfies every postulate of the context.

The alternative theory, though, as we believe, purely conjectural and arbitrary, has not been brushed aside in any cavalier style, for no statement in the process of exposition has been an over-statement, but has been attested substantially. If the exegesis now submitted be sound, it follows that the Apostolic Church employed the Psalms alone in the ordinance of worship, and that to restrict ourselves to them in this sacred exercise is a New Testament commandment.

Under the opposite interpretation, let it be noticed

1. That the Psalms still have the primacy, taking precedence of hymns and spiritual songs, and that most hymn-singing Churches ignore this by confining themselves to a human hymnology.

2. That the singing of uninspired hymns in worship is not barely permitted, but is explicitly prescribed, and is, therefore, binding—a contention which few would care to defend.

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Among the authorities upholding the foregoing interpretation of these passages may be mentioned the following: Clement, the celebrated Greek Father who presided over the Catechetical School at Alexandria (*Paidagogos*, Lib. iii. Cap. 4); Jerome, the most learned of the early Fathers of the Latin Church (*Com. on Eph.*); Beza, the friend and ablest coadjutor of Calvin (*Com. on Col.*); John Owen, the prince of English divines in the seventeenth century (Preface to a metrical edition of the Psalms published in 1673 for use among the Independents and Dissenters of

England); Jean Daillé, d. 1670, a celebrated French Protestant minister (*Expos. of Col.*); Cotton Mather, d. 1728, the well-known New England author; Thomas Ridgley, a standard English writer on theology (*Body of Divinity, Edition of 1819, Vol. iv., p. 134*); Jonathan Edwards, d. 1758, the noted American divine and metaphysician (*Hist. of Redemption, Period i., Part v.*); John Gill, a learned Orientalist and Baptist theologian of the eighteenth century (*Body of Divinity and Com. on Eph.*); John Brown, of Haddington, Scotland, professor of divinity in the Associate Synod of Scotland, d. 1787 (*Dictionary of the Bible*); William Romaine, an eminent author of the eighteenth century in the Church of England; Walter F. Hook, d. 1875, an Anglican dean and ecclesiastical historian (*Church Dictionary*); The Encyclopædia Britannica, article on *Hymns*, by the Right Hon. the Earl of Selborne; William Binnie, of Scotland (*The Psalms: Their History, Teachings, and Use. London, 1877*); H. C. B. Bazely, of Oxford, England, d. 1883 (*Biography*); E. L. Hicks, Hon. Canon of Worcester, Church of England (*Biography of Henry Bazely*); Eduard Reuss, of Strasburg, the great Alsatian Protestant theologian, d. 1891 (*History of the New Testament*); Tayler Lewis, for many years professor of Greek Language and Literature in Union College, Schenectady, N. Y. (*The Bible Psalmody*); Philip Schaff, of Union Theological Seminary, New York City, the distinguished Church historian, d. 1893 (*Hist. of the Christian Church, Vol. i., p. 463*); and the late John A. Broadus, of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (*Com. on Matt.*).

but before we leave this part of the subject permit several observations.

*Observation One.* Once all the Reformed Churches were singing Psalms, and nearly all were singing them exclusively in the praise of God. The departure from the use of Psalms came about gradually. No Church ever yet went directly from the first position to the third. A stop has always been made at position number two, and for a time Psalms were used "and hymns also."

*Observation Two.* "And hymns also." These words are a gate. They are intended to admit into the worship of God the best devotional compositions of uninspired men to be used along with the songs of the Psalter. But when this gate is opened there follows another fulfilment of the dream of Pharaoh, and "the lean kine eat up the fat," for after a time the songs of inspiration are dropped from the praise-book one by one, until few or none are left. The gate enlarges until it becomes an open sluice-gate through which there sweeps into the Church a flood of hymnology. Congregations no longer use the hymn-book authorized by the Church to which they belong, but they secure the song-books pushed upon the market by traveling evangelists, enterprising Sabbath-school publishing houses, and money-loving book-dealers. In a single denomination the books of praise may be numbered by the dozen, and sometimes nearly a half-dozen may be found in a single congregation for use in its various services. The confusion seen in the present state of modern hymnology reminds one of the probable conditions prevailing about the base of Babel's tower when God vetoed some man-made plans for reaching heaven.

In the experience of the Church, the opening of the small gate is followed sooner or later by the adoption of the taste or preference standard. Then comes the deluge.

*Observation Three.* The "whatever-you-prefer" plan of worshiping was tried early and often in past dispensations, even though God's appointments concerning worship were explicit and not difficult to understand. The "taste standard" was tried in the days of Cain, and again in the days of Nadab and Abihu, and



once again when "proud Korah's troop was swallowed up." To some extent this standard was used in the days of Malachi, and the blind and the lame and the sick were offered in sacrifice instead of the offering commanded. If these and other similar attempts to explore the possibilities of the "taste standard" had proven safe or profitable, sacrificial victims might have been furnished for the altar from the swineherds of Israel's neighbors, or from the dogs that were without, or from any species of clean or unclean animal that was known to priest or worshiper. If the "whatever-you-prefer" plan of worshipping had been permitted to reach this stage of development, the droves of sacrificial victims on the way to the temple or to some other place, selected in accord with the "taste standard," would have possessed all the variety to be found in a zoölogical garden.

A variety such as this actually appears in the modern songs of devotion with which God's people send heavenward their offerings of praise. Ten thousand songs may be found in the authorized hymnals of the different Churches and an uncounted number in books of praise not thus authorized, and the hymn-makers and the hymn-book publishers are still busy. Some splendid specimens of devotional literature may be found in these collections, but along with these are many trashy songs that would not be given a place in any volume of poetry outside of a hymn-book. The most savage criticism of some of these songs comes from those who use them in praise, and if we are to accept their testimony these poorer songs resemble in some of their characteristics the animals offered in sacrifice in the days of Malachi. The religious doggerel of irresponsible hymn-makers, and the crudest songs of the Salvation Army, and the heresy-spreading hymns of the Mormons, and the religious jumbles that may be heard in the "Black Belt," have as good a right in God's worship as the best hymns ever written by men or given to the Church by the Spirit of God—if all depends on the preference of the worshipers. Is there not something wrong with the theory that the untaught convert from heathenism may properly become the



hymn-writer for the native Church, and that the taste of the worshipers is the only thing that is to be consulted in connection with his self-appointed task? If God had appointed a lamb for an offering, would it not have been improper to substitute a horse? If He has appointed "the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" of the Psalter for the offering of praise, would it not likewise be improper to substitute something else that the worshiper prefers?

The survey of the present situation reveals a present issue. The issue is not new, and the position of the Psalm-singing Churches is just as strong to-day as it was when the entire Christian Church was using the Psalter alone as its book of praise.

#### THE OUTLOOK OF THE CAUSE OF PSALMODY

The subject is interesting and important. Nevertheless, I stop and hesitate in turning from the present to the future. My ability to interpret prophecy or read the signs of the times is small.

The angel that wakened Zechariah out of sleep proposed a question, "What seest thou?" The angel's question comes to us as we go up to one of Zion's watch towers to see what may be seen. The curtain that veils the future hangs low. We cannot see through it or over it, and we would not if we could. But looking in other directions we may be able to learn something about the possibilities and the probabilities that lie beyond the curtain.

I. We are helped to a proper view of the outlook of the Psalmody cause by a look backward. In history we always find prophecy. The backward look presents good grounds for the belief that the Psalter will last to the end of time, and that some Christians will be singing it as long as it lasts, and also that we may expect desertions from, and accessions to, the cause of Psalmody.

(1) The Psalter will never become antiquated or obsolete. The message from the past concerning modern hymn-books is very different from this. The antiquated hymn-books once

authorized by the different hymn-singing Churches were used less than twenty years each, while evangelistic songs and Sabbath-school books furnished in such variety and abundance have invariably worn out in a few seasons. The hundred or more hymn-books in the world to-day will soon share the fate of their predecessors.

In striking contrast with these ephemeral productions we would place the Psalter, used for thirty centuries. History tells us that there is no more danger of this Book wearing out than there is of the Bible wearing out. It is the will of God that this Praise-Book shall continue in use till the end of time.

(2) There will always be a remnant using the Psalter exclusively as material for praise. At times this remnant may not be large, but it will exist, nevertheless, until the promise of His Coming is fulfilled. Some of our number may feel lonely at times when they reflect upon the present situation. On some occasions they may be able to sympathize with a discouraged prophet who found a resting-place under a certain juniper tree. They may even paraphrase the prophet's words in an attempt to describe the present situation and to express their own feelings: "There are not many of us left, and they are likely to get some of us, too." But fewness in number does not mean failure. God has not chosen to advance His cause by keeping it on the crest of the wave of popular enthusiasm. We read history, and we learn that the witnesses to the truth are sometimes a little flock, a faithful remnant, a handful of corn for the mountain, a little leaven for the meal. But never since the promise was given outside the gates of Eden has the cause of God been without witnesses ready to live for the truth and to die for the truth. The same has been true of correct principles of worship in all dispensations; some have always been found adhering to the forms of worship appointed in the Word of God. Ever since this Praise-Book has been given to the Church, some have been singing the songs of inspiration. They were few at times, and they were persecuted at times, but from churches or forests or fields or

caves or the sides of rugged mountains the voice of Psalm-singing has ever carried heavenward the praises of the faithful. Some may cease to sing the Psalms, but the Psalms will not cease to be sung.

(3) We may also learn from the past the probability of desertions from the cause of Psalmody and the possibility of large accessions. Church history contains the record of numerous desertions. Some of them are recent. Within the past few years there have been negotiations for union between one of the eighteen Psalm-singing bodies and a large hymn-singing denomination. Yes, there may be future desertions from the cause of Psalmody both on the part of members and denominations, just as there have been in the past.

On the other hand, history holds before us the hope of large increase among the adherents of the cause. The handful of corn may increase; the leaven may spread; the children of the kingdom may multiply; and the faithful remnant may become a mighty host. We often read of corruptions in worship in Old Testament history. A few faithful were always left, and when a time of revival and reformation came these faithful ones increased a hundred-fold, and corruptions in worship were swept away. Nothing in the Dark Ages exhibits the need of a reformation more clearly than the songs that were used in the Romish Church and sung in praise of saints and angels. Even in those dark hours a few faithful ones were still using the Psalter. But what a change there was when the Reformation period came! Then the Psalms were sung almost exclusively in the Reformed Churches. And may we not hope that when a new reformation, a world-wide revival, sweeps over the Church, these songs of inspiration will be sung by uncounted multitudes of the saved?

2. We are also helped to a proper view of the outlook of the Psalmody cause by a look outward. The outward look reveals an alarming extension of the use of the "taste standard," dissatisfaction with present hymnology, and abundant reason for the continued existence of the Psalmody cause.

(1) The "taste standard" has been extended by some until it includes nearly all of faith and practice. In some of the former strongholds of orthodoxy the descendants of the Reformers have not only given up the Psalms, but, sadder still, they seem to have given up faith in the inspired Word of God. It seems difficult to find a safe stopping-place when the "whatever-you-prefer" theory is once accepted, and the faith of the fathers surrendered. One of the first applications of the theory is likely to be, "Let us make our own songs." In some instances we see a second application, "Let us make our own Bible, or make over the one we have." Then it will not be hard to listen to other proposals, "Let us make our own religion, and let us make our own gods." In the conditions that make the living as well as the dying tremble for the Ark of God we read a danger signal, "Beware of adding to, or taking from, the appointments of God." We should be sure that the Early Church and the Reformation Church were wrong before we try to substitute "something up-to-date" for their faith and practice in the matter of singing praises to God.

(2) Dissatisfaction with present-day hymnology and a desire on the part of some to return to a larger use of the Psalms in worship are also to be seen in the outward look. The sentiment has been expressed by prominent hymn-singers that it would be a blessing to the Church if nine-tenths of the hymns in use were lost beyond recovery. The changing of song-books and the criticism of the songs that are in use indicate this dissatisfaction. Here is a sample from a mass of criticism. It is taken from a paper of the Baptist Church, and therefore is not prejudiced against the songs criticised. "Recent national conventions of the Christian Endeavorers and the Baptist Young People's Unions afford new evidence of the poverty of these organizations in hymns that rise above the level of religious doggerel into the realm of genuine poetry." A prominent minister of the Presbyterian Church writes thus concerning some of the material for praise in his own Church: "Our hymns do not satisfy us. There is much in them



that is weak and trifling, and we would like to have songs with more character and endurance in them. Many of the newer productions are very beautiful and stirring, but they wear out in a season or two. I have felt for a long time that there is an under-current in the Presbyterian Church that may be turned at any time toward the restoration of the Psalms to their rightful place in the hymnology of our Church." The moderator of the last General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (1905), in a sermon at Winona, Ind., raised the question: "Have we gained by substituting our modern hymns for practically all the Psalms which once shared an equal space in our hymn-book?" In the same connection this language was used: "If we can but agree upon a literary, metrical, and Christian version of the Psalms that we can all use without leaving some Christian emotion unexpressed, we may also introduce into our public worship a higher form of praise than any one Church now possesses." There is something favorable to the Psalmody cause to be found in the utterance of this sentiment upon such an occasion, but we attach even more significance to the approval of the sentiment that was heard on every side at Winona, and the commendations that came afterward from the different parts of the Church. If the conservative element in sister Churches succeed in bringing the Psalter back to a place in the praise service, much will be accomplished; and if they fail, the position of the aforementioned eighteen Churches bids fair to become the rallying-ground of orthodoxy.

(3) The need for men of granite and iron did not cease when the fires of martyrdom died out and the ax of the executioner became rusty. More than enormous wealth or extensive public improvements or secular education, the present age needs men of heroic mold, that exalt God and fear not the face of any mortal; men that sell not honor nor compromise the truth; men of strong convictions, unyielding wills, lofty motives, and brave hearts. The Psalms had much to do with the building of such characters in the troublous times that tried the souls of men long ago, and we believe that they have a mission in the future no

less important. "We need to-day," says a great French writer, "a generation nourished on this marrow of lions."

3. Again, we are helped to a proper view of the outlook of the Psalmody cause by a look inward. Hope and alarm are mingled as we look along the thin far-flung line of the defenders of this cause. Ultra-conservatism may damage the cause by attaching the same importance to venerable customs as it does to divine appointment. At one time it insists on "lining out" the Psalms, when the necessity for the practice has passed. At another time it insists on the use of tokens or antiquated versions of the Psalms, when good reasons exist for a change. Customs and methods of work are approved or forbidden solely because they were used or not used by the preceding generation.

Then, too, there may be found among some of our number a spirit of iconoclastic liberalism that stands in the green meadows of an inspired Psalmody and looks longingly over ecclesiastical fences into the highway where the beauties of the "taste-standard" are exhibited in short pastures and murky streams of water.

Some with ten generations of Psalm-singing ancestry behind them are planning to climb into the highway or introduce the "taste standard" into the pasture where the Psalm-singing flock is feeding. Special choir music is sometimes chosen by those ignorant of our position, or disloyal to it, from other sources than the Psalter, and some ministers and members are found who persuade themselves that in their own places of worship only that which is appointed should be offered in praise, but in other places they may properly offer whatever is within reach.

The writer believes the great majority of Psalm-singers to be neither ultra-conservative nor ultra-liberal, and, therefore, he sees some things favorable to the cause when his eyes are turned in the direction of the Psalm-singing Churches.

(1) In favor of the cause we find the witnesses well located. All the lighthouses are not placed in the same corner of the sea; neither are all the street lights found in the same part of the

city. Missionaries are not all sent to the same corner of the globe, but, like the lights, they are distributed among needy fields. God has distributed Psalm-singers over the world in such a way that they are well located to be light-bearers and witnesses and missionaries among men.

(2) In favor of the cause we find a safe, strong position. Power does not lie in the direction of a retreat from an impregnable position. These Psalm-singing Churches now have an influence for good in the world out of all proportion to their numbers, and if they should desert their position on Psalmody there is reason to believe that the old sad story of Samson's strength and weakness would be repeated. Our position on Psalmody is the first line of defense, and a strong line of defense, for the fundamentals of our religion. If we should desert this first position under the assaults that are made upon it, we would find that the roar of battle would be heard about some other position in a short time, and it might be that the point of the next attack would be the inspiration of the Bible, or the Atonement, or the divinity of Christ.

(3) The movement toward a common version of the Psalms is favorable to the cause. It would result in confusion if each denomination made its own version of the Bible, or even its own prose version of the Psalms. In like manner confusion is sure to be the result when each denomination makes or chooses its own metrical version of the Psalter. The prose version of the Psalms considered the best has been placed in the English Bible for all denominations. A competent Inter-denominational Committee from Churches which use the Psalms wholly or in part has been laboring for years to produce the very best metrical version for the praise services of every denomination that desires to use Psalms. That work has recently been completed. If found satisfactory, or when made satisfactory, this version should have a place in every Church where Psalms are used. A second inter-denominational committee should select suitable music for this book, and then neither words nor music should be changed except

by a committee from the Churches interested. If individual denominations insist on other versions of some of the Psalms, or different music for some of their services, it would be better to add these in a separate book than to disturb the words and music of the common version which binds together the Psalm-singing world.

(4) The human factor has more to do with the success of the cause than versions or strong positions or anything else that may be seen by the inward look. Battles are said to be won or lost not by the guns of an army but by the men behind the guns. The cause of Psalmody depends for its success on the member behind the metrical version and the strong position. God could build up a cause as He built the world—without the help of any mortal, but He has not chosen to work in this way. Back of every advancing cause, and expanding nation, and growing Church, there are loyal, courageous, energetic, self-sacrificing human units. Hence, the prospects of the Psalmody cause are dependent on the personnel of its supporters. If among them there are conviction, consecration, courage, energy, perseverance, visions of conquest, and dreams of empire for the kingdom of our Lord, then neither fire nor flood, neither men nor devils, can stop the advancing cause, for it is as easy to stop the inflowing tide with a broom or turn back the onrushing light rays at day-dawn with a curtain as it is to stop the onward rush of an expanding nation, a growing Church, or an advancing cause. These Psalm-singing Churches are not to be regarded as cold storage plants for the preservation of the truth, but rather as a part of an army enlisted for conquest. It is easier to hold the truth, and to hold it in its proper relation to other truth, when there is an onward movement for world conquest than it is to hold the truth by making its defense our only motive. And going forward, with iron in their blood, the marrow of lions in their bones, the blood of martyrs in their veins, the truth of God in their hearts, the Songs of Zion on their lips, and the dew of eternal youth upon the cause they represent, I see no reason why



these Psalm-singing Churches may not do as valiant service for "Christ and the Covenant" in the future as their fathers did in the past.

4. Again we are helped to a proper view of the outlook of the Psalmody cause by a look upward. On his knees in prayer, the adherent of this cause will see a more favorable outlook when his face is turned heavenward than when he looks backward, outward, or inward.

(1) Our hope and expectation for the success of the Psalmody cause depend on God alone. In the Constitutional Convention Benjamin Franklin uttered these memorable words, "I have lived for a long time, eighty-one years, and the longer I live the more convincing proof I have of the truth that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured, sir, in the sacred writings that 'except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.' I firmly believe that without His concurring aid we shall proceed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel. I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven and its blessing on our deliberations be held in this assembly before we proceed to business."

Looking upward, the sentiment expressed by Franklin comes to our hearts. We are trying to build something no less important than a political edifice, and unless God builds with us our efforts will be vain. We are trying to keep something that we believe to be more precious than the security of an ancient city, and unless God is the keeper of His truth "the watchman waketh but in vain." "Our help is in the name of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth," and to a praying people the prospects of a good cause are as bright as God's promises. To your prayer-closets and to your knees, then, ye singers of Psalms, and keep not silence before the Lord, and give Him no rest until He make the cause which we represent a praise and a blessing in the earth! And if a world-wide work of grace should come by way of these

Psalm-singing Churches, far more will be accomplished for the cause than by debate and wrangling with Christian brethren. Then, many of the redeemed on earth, beholding among these Psalm-singing Churches loyalty to the truth, interest and prosperity in missions, consecration of wealth, activity, and power in service, will be heard saying to each other, "Come, let us also sing the Songs of Zion."

(2) Guided by Scripture in our look heavenward, we have good reason to believe that the principle for which we stand will one day be recognized by all that serve God. Some years ago a member of one of our Ohio congregations visited in Scotland. Although reared in a hymn-singing Church she had come to be in such sympathy with our position on Psalmody that she kept silence during the singing of hymns in the church of her relatives. Her silence was noted and resented by her companion. "When you Psalm-singers get to heaven," said the critic, "will you get off in some corner by yourselves and keep quiet while all heaven is ringing with the praises of the redeemed?" The reply was worthy of a theologian: "When we get to heaven we will do there what we are doing here; we will sing whatever God appoints to be sung."

Yes, in some glad day we believe that the principle of worship which is behind the exclusive use of the Psalms in praise will be recognized as correct by all the followers of the Lamb. I do not know whether the day will ever come when the redeemed on earth will use the Psalter only in singing God's praise. Neither do I know whether this book of praise will be used by saints and angels when the glory dispensation of the Church is ushered in, and the redeemed are all gathered home. But I do know that when in our home-going we come into the glory of His presence, where joy is full and pleasures are eternal, then saints redeemed by precious blood, and unfallen angels, and archangels, too, will worship God according to His appointments.

We labor and pray that as God's will is done in heaven, so it may be done on earth.

## THE STATUS AND OUTLOOK OF THE CAUSE OF PSALMODY

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**A**N outlook is an elevated point from which one may look all around the horizon, eastward and westward, backward and forward. By the varied discussions of these Conventions we have been ascending the hill and getting many delightful views of the Psalms as we ascend. Let us now look out from the summit of the undertaking. We may take a backward look along the way we have come, and then look out over the valleys of the future that stretch beyond in inviting, hopeful prospect.

Let us get a bird's-eye view of *the past*. Such a retrospect will necessarily traverse the same ground that others have passed over, will say the same things they have said. But let it be done, if possible, more rapidly, less completely, and with some eye on the end in view.

I. The value of the Psalter as a devotional book has been universally recognized by the people of God. We speak of it now not as a song-book, but as a devotional book only, whether read or sung. In all ages and countries and communions it has entered more fully into the spiritual life than even the Books of the New Testament. Augustine called the Psalms "an epitome of the whole Scriptures," and Luther called them "his little Bible" and clung to his "old and ragged" Psalter as a tried and trusty friend. Calvin says, "Not without good grounds am I wont to call this book an anatomy of all parts of the soul, since no one can experience emotions whose portrait he could not behold reflected in its mirror." That survival from the Middle Ages

that is published in manifold and attractive forms, and that heads every list of devotional literature—"The Imitation of Christ"—caught its inspiration from the Psalter. Prothero says, "From the nature of the subject, the Imitation might be expected to rely mainly on the New Testament. But in thought, feeling, and language it is largely based on the Psalter."

Let me summon a few witnesses to the devotional superiority of the Psalms—witnesses that all intelligent Christians will hear with confidence. Says Albert Barnes, "With additional light which has been under the Christian revelation, the Psalms have not been superseded. The Christian looks to the Psalms with an interest as intense as did the ancient Jew. . . . They will retain their value in all time to come, nor will there ever be in our world such advance in religious light, experience, and knowledge, that they will lose their relative place as connected with the exercise of practical piety. David is the Psalmist of eternity; a thousand eulogies have been uttered over these hymns of the heart, these soul songs of all God's children." Patrick Fairbairn, in his "Typology of Scripture," says, "The Book of Psalms, standing midway between both covenants, and serving equally to the members of each as the handmaid of a living piety, is a witness of the essential identity of their primary and fundamental ideas. There the disciples of Moses and of Christ meet as on common ground, the one taking up as their most natural and fitting expressions of faith and hope the hallowed words which the other had been wont to use in their devotion ages before, and then bequeathed as a legacy to succeeding generations of believers." What a vivid, strong witness is this of Friedrich W. Krummacher: "Who that is somewhat intimately acquainted with the Psalms is not forced as he reads them to pause and consider whether it be true that between him—the reader—and the birthdays of these songs almost three thousand years intervene? Do they not all breathe the same freshness of life as if they had been composed but yesterday? It seems to us with them as if we dwelt in our own houses and beside our own altars; and



this thought rests on no delusion. How strange to us the songs of other nations sound, while in the Psalms of Israel we everywhere meet with our own God and with the whole range of our own personal feelings and experiences. Is it not clear from this that it was He Who knows the hearts, Whose throne is in the heavens, Who Himself loosed the tongue of the sacred singer that he might sing songs for all ages and give expression to all the diverse moods of feeling which move ever and anon in the world of hallowed thought?" Dr. Cooke, the great champion of orthodoxy in the Irish Presbyterian Church, while partial to paraphrases, when rising from a bed of sickness said, "The Psalms, the Psalms which God has given, these alone have unction that will do for a sick-bed and a dying hour." Gladstone, whose ample knowledge makes his comparison noteworthy, says, "All the wonders of Greek civilization heaped together are less wonderful than is the simple Book of Psalms—the history of the human soul in relation to its Maker." In a sermon on "The Homesickness of the Soul," the Rev. G. H. Morrison says, "If the Book of Psalms has lived through chance and change and been cherished when ten thousand volumes are forgotten, it is largely because it gives a voice in noblest poetry to this unappeased hunger of mankind. We do not crave for God because He is glorious. We are just homesick—that is the meaning of it. We crave for God because He is our home." Joseph Cook, the distinguished Boston Monday Lecturer, when speaking on Inspiration said, "We come to the great Psalms, which assuredly have no equal in literature, and which are palpably rained out of a higher sky than unassisted human genius has dropped its productions from." Richard G. Moulton, the great student of the Bible as literature, says, "The change from Judaism to Christianity is immense, but it is a change that has had no influence on the Book of Psalms; the modern Christian turns to it as naturally as the ancient Hebrew. It is safe to predict that however much mankind may alter the articles of its belief, the Hebrew Psalms will not cease to furnish matter for liturgy and stimulus to private

devotion." Dr. Alexander Maclaren utters himself in this fine, poetic strain, "The Psalter may be regarded as the heart-echo to the speech of God, the manifold music of its wind-swept strings as God's breath sweeps across them." And Lamartine says with equal poetic beauty, "The Book of Psalms is a vase of perfume broken on the steps of the temple and shedding abroad its odors to the heart of humanity."

Dr. W. G. Blaikie, of Scotland, after comparing the Psalms with hymns of other religions, and having shown, as he expresses it, their "towering preëminence," concludes his discussion as follows, "The Psalms have proved real forces in human life, enlightening, guiding and comforting, strengthening and purifying character, teaching men's hands to war and their fingers to fight, inspiring the faith that removes mountains, and the hope that even in the lowest depth of adversity waits patiently for the dawn. . . . The Psalms cannot be of mere human manufacture. Reason itself demands for them a higher origin. They are like the stars,

'Forever singing as they shine:  
The Hand that made us is divine.'

Henry Ward Beecher says, "There are a great many hymns that tell us to praise God and that tell us about praising God; but how few hymns of uninspired writers contain the very thing itself and burst forth in high jubilation. How little literature there is that is suited to the purposes of praise, except David's spiritual Psalms and Hymns, which not only pour out to God everything the soul can command, but summon the angels, the heavens, the earth, the elements, mountains and hills, trees, beasts, kings, princes and judges, young men and maidens, old men and children, prophets, priests, and all people, and the everlasting spheres to praise Him."

If we might add testimonies to particular Psalms we might fill a volume concerning their devotional value. I shall quote only

a little bit of the eulogy of Mr. Beecher on the Twenty-Third Psalm: "The Twenty-Third Psalm is the nightingale of the Psalms. It is small and of a homely feather, singing shyly out of obscurity; but, oh, it has filled the air of the whole world with melodious joy, greater than the heart can conceive. Blessed be the day on which that Psalm was born." And then after telling a little of its wondrous history in the experience of believers, he says, "Nor is its work done. It will go singing to your children and my children and to their children through all the generations of time; nor will it fold its wings till the last pilgrim is safe and time ended; and then it shall fly back to the bosom of God, whence it issued, and sound on mingled with all those sounds of celestial joy which make heaven musical forever." If the histories of individual Psalms were given with even as great fulness as the story of the Psalms in general has been told, they would swell into a mighty chorus of appreciation. How can we resist the conclusion, as we listen, that a larger use should be made of the Songs of Israel by the Church of God in all her branches to the end of devotional impulse?

II. The Psalms have been used in the praise service of the Church from the very beginning of her history. Whether or not more be included in the triple designation, it is certain that the Apostle had the Psalms in mind when he bade the disciples "admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." It is altogether certain that Christ and the Apostles sang Psalms. It will not be disputed that the first Lord's Supper closed with a hymn from the Hebrew Psalter. When Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises in the prison at Philippi "it is probable that it was portions of the Psalms, so rich in such matter, which the joyous sufferers chanted forth." Neander tells us that "the Psalms were used from the earliest times for public worship in the Western Church." Dean Stanley, in his lectures on the "History of the Jewish Church," says, "In the first centuries the Psalms were sung at the love-feasts and formed the morning and evening hymns of the primitive Churches. . . . They were

sung by the plowmen of Palestine in the time of Jerome; by the boatmen of Gaul in the time of Sidonius Apollinaris. In the most barbarous Churches the Abyssinians treat the Psalter almost as an idol. . . . In the most Protestant Churches—the Presbyterians of Scotland, the Non-Conformists of England—Psalm-singing has almost passed into a familiar description of their ritual. In the Churches of Rome and of England they are daily recited in proportions such as far exceed the reverence shown to any other portion of Scripture.” Well may Bishop Walsh in his “Voices of the Psalms” say, “Enshrined for centuries in public worship, the Psalter has become the Hymnal of the Universal Church. Jew and Gentile, Greek and Latin, Churchman and Dissenter, turn to it alike as the embodiment of the highest and holiest thoughts.” In the fourth century the great Athanasius (300-343) tells us that it was the custom to sing the Psalms, which he calls “a mirror of the soul.” Somewhat later, Augustine (343-430) in his “Confessions” (ix. 4) says of them, “They are sung through the whole world, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.” Chrysostom also tells how the Psalms enlivened the life of believers in his day: “David is always in their mouths, not only in the cities and in the churches, but in the courts, in the mountains, in the deserts, in the wilderness.” The Council of Braga (350 A. D.) made the following enactment: “Except the Psalms and hymns of the Old and New Testaments, nothing of a poetical nature is to be sung in the Church” (Schaff-Herzog). The Council of Nicæa enacted in the end of the eighth century (787 A. D.) that “no one should be made a bishop until he knew the entire Psalter by heart.” Prothero, after reciting this fact, makes the general assertion, “By the Psalms were sustained the lives and deaths of the men whose spiritual daring converted Europe to Christianity.” St. Patrick has been called, not without good reason, “A good Psalm-singing Presbyterian.” Columba transcribed the Psalter and rallied the clans to fight for his right to retain the copy he made. The Crusaders sang the Psalms on the way to the Holy City. Wyclif, the



Morning Star of the Reformation, sang them in the fourteenth century, and John Huss sang them amid the flames of martyrdom in the fifteenth century. I quote from Dr. Talbot W. Chambers, an eminent and scholarly minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, who not long since passed away, as follows: "According to Eusebius the martyrs in the Thebaid employed their last breath in uttering these divine compositions, just as was done centuries later by John Huss and Jerome of Prague when burning at the stake. And still in our own day these songs continue to fill their high office as a manual of public and private devotion."

If now we leave the main current of ecclesiastical history and follow the course of the medieval dissenters, the Waldenses, we find them likewise singing Psalms amid the mountains of Piedmont, and, until recent date, singing them almost exclusively. "Singing Psalms was not only a part of their worship, but also their recreation from labor and their solace at work. The women carrying their milk from the pasturage, and the laborer in the fields, the shepherd on the mountain side, and the mechanic in his workshop, cheered themselves by singing the Psalms of David. They committed them to memory in French and sang them without the book, and were so noted for Psalm-singing that for anyone to be found singing Psalms was taken for good proof that he was a Vaudois."

In view of this very brief history showing the large place held by the Psalms in the authorized worship of the Church from the beginning and all along the way, are we not justified in prizing them for similar use in the Church of to-day? Can we not unite with Dr. Philip Schaff in his declaration: "The Psalter is the first hymn-book of the Church, and it will outlive all other hymn-books. Its treasury of pious experience and spiritual comfort will never be exhausted." And can we not agree with Dr. Washington Gladden, who, after an enthusiastic recital of the splendid story of the Psalms, closes with these appreciative, prophetic words: "Lyrics like these, into which so much of the divine truth was breathed when they were written, and which a hundred

generations of the children of men have saturated with tears and praises, with battle shouts and sobs of pain, with all the highest and deepest experiences of the human soul, will live as long as joy lives and long after sorrow ceases; will live beyond this life and be sung by pure voices in that land from which the silent dove, coming from afar, brings us now and then upon her shining wings some glimpses of a glory that eye hath never seen."

III. The Psalms were adhered to as the sole matter of praise in the Reformed or Calvinistic Churches for more than a century and a half after the Reformation. Dr. John Ker, in his little book on the "Psalms in History and Biography," says, "In the Churches of the Reformation, it may be remarked that hymns belonged more to those of the Lutheran order and Psalms to those of the Reformed or Calvinistic. . . . Among the Reformed Churches the use of hymns entered at a period comparatively late, in the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century." Other Protestant Churches used the Psalms, but not with the same emphasis. Tholuck says, "Besides filling so large a place in the worship of the Church, this Book has furnished the model and suggested the idea of Christian song. Many of Luther's most admired hymns are free translations from the Psalms." The Rev. R. B. Taggart, a man given to careful research, says that Luther wrote in 1545, when he saw the Psalter being displaced by human compositions, "Ah, they have not the sap, the strength, the heart, the fire, that I find in the Psalter."

But the Reformed Churches, as Tholuck tells us, "that is, the Presbyterians in France, Holland, Britain, and elsewhere, held themselves bound to adhere to a closer Scriptural Psalmody, and accordingly the Psalter was metrically translated for use in public worship." Dr. McCrie, in his life of Knox, says, "In every Protestant country a metrical version of the Psalms in the vernacular language appeared at a very early period. The French version begun by Clément Marot and completed by Beza contributed much to the spread of the Reformation in France."

Baird, in his life of Beza, gives a glowing account of the Huguenot Psalter. It was issued through Beza's influence under the sanction of the French government in 1561. It had an immediate and wonderful success. Sixty editions were published in four years, and it went into the homes of the people everywhere. "It was not curiosity that had to be gratified; it was a veritable famine for the Word of God that had to be satisfied. The men, women, and children even would sing the Psalms, and at any price they must have the books containing the Psalms for use at home, in the shop, especially in over 2000 congregations." To these Psalms the Huguenots were indebted very largely for their distinctive heroic character. They were fed, as Lelievre says, on "the marrow of lions." The Psalms were the "badge by which they were recognized by friend and foe alike; they were the stimulus of the brave, the battle-cry of the combatant, the last consolatory words whispered in the ears of the dying." In the Churches of the Netherlands and the Palatinate the attachment to the Psalms was equally pronounced. And if we cross over into Britain, the land of our ancestors, we find the same early and decided preference for the Psalms. "The earlier versions were soon supplanted by the version begun by Sternhold and Hopkins and finished by the English exiles at Geneva." (McCrie.) This was printed in England, and usually bound up with the English Liturgy, and in 1564 was printed separately in Edinburgh for the use of the Scottish Church. Every householder was required by enactment of Parliament to have in his house a Bible and Psalm-book in the vernacular language for the better instruction of themselves and their families in the knowledge of God; each person under penalty of ten pounds. The first Book of Discipline of the Scottish Kirk, drawn up in 1560 by John Knox and five other ministers, and subscribed by the Kirk and Lords, contains this instructive section: "Moreover, men, women, and children should be exhorted to exercise themselves in Psalms, that when the Kirk doth convene and sing they may be the more able together with common hearts and voices to praise God." This provision might

well be revived, and congregational singing in good form and volume might be secured, if the families would exercise themselves in Psalms at home.

It is not only a courteous Christian procedure that the Alliance of the Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian System continues to use the Psalms in the formal worship of its meetings, but it is in accordance with the consensus of belief, and with the heritage of our fathers in all lands. We sit down with Knox and Calvin and Beza and Zwingli in the kingdom of heaven, aye, and with Luther and Melancthon, and sing with them the Psalms they loved so well. We conclude this point with the words of Perowne, "The history of the Psalms is the history of the Church and the history of every heart in which has burned the love of God. . . . Surely it is holy ground. We cannot pray the Psalms without realizing in a very special manner the communion of saints, the oneness of the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant."

IV. If we come now to our own country we find the Pilgrim fathers and Pilgrim mothers singing the Psalms. The Puritan divines soon prepared a version of their own, which was one of the first books published in America. Prothero is hardly correct when he says, "Till the end of the eighteenth century the Psalms were exclusively sung in the churches and chapels of America." Yet it is true that they were the only vehicle of the Church's praises for over a hundred years after the landing of the Pilgrims, and that they were in most general use till the end of the eighteenth century. Puritans and Presbyterians alike used the Psalms in their worship. The Westminster Assembly directed concerning worship as follows: "It is the duty of Christians to praise God publicly by singing Psalms together in the congregation and also privately in the family," and the same Assembly provided with great labor and care a version of the Psalms for use in all the churches of the realm. This direction and the authorized version the Presbyterians brought with them to this country, and for many years they were content to continue in the ways of



the fathers. About the middle of the eighteenth century Dr. Watts' Imitation of the Psalms appeared, and the movement was started in favor of the hymns which has now almost entirely supplanted the Psalms in the praises of the larger bodies of the Presbyterian or Reformed faith. In 1765 the following action was taken by the General Synod of the Presbyterian Church in America: "After some consideration of the query concerning the use of Dr. Watts' Imitation of the Psalms, the Synod judged it best in present circumstances only to declare that they look on the inspired Psalms in Scripture to be proper matter to be sung in divine worship, according to their original design and the practice of the Churches; yet will not forbid those to use the Imitation of them whose judgment and inclination lead them to do so." First there was toleration, then authorization, then addition, then virtual exclusion of the Psalms; and now let us hope there is a beginning of reaction in favor of the Psalms.

The attitude of the Psalm-singing Churches may be justified as conservative of what our forefathers maintained. We have not introduced new things, but have stood for the old as better. We have simply kept in line with the primitive believers, the Reformers of the sixteenth century, the Westminster divines, and the first settlers of our own land. We have at least held fast to that which is good, and of course have been slow to accept anything else as worthy to stand by its side.

V. The present status of the Psalms in the worship of the Church, though not all that we might wish, is not barren of expectation. It is no inconsiderable host that is at present keeping step with their music. Six bodies of Christians in this country, with an aggregate membership of about 180,000, sing them only in praise to God. And this great host, while holding fast, is pressing on, anchored, yet aggressive, finding no hindrance in evangelism or missionary enterprise in limitation to these divine songs. Dr. John Ker says: "After being largely excluded from the French Hymn-book, the Psalms are now finding their way back, and in the edition published at the tercentenary of the

organization of the French Protestant Church there are seventy Psalms or portions of Psalms with the original melodies included in the collection of sacred songs." And with reference to his own land, while not asking for them "an exclusive place," he expresses the wish that "the Presbyterian Church should take the whole old Psalter into its hand, reverently and kindly, and, touching it here and there, give us something to sing, full of the past and yet fitted for the present—something we might hope which could be joined in, as truly catholic, by sister Churches of other names, and which might form a bond of union more free and wide than entered into the thought of the Westminster Assembly."

The Protestant Episcopal Church gives a prominence to the Psalms in its liturgy that you will scarcely find anywhere else. It provides for the reading of the whole body of the Psalms in prose once every month, and also includes in the service of song portions of all the Psalms in meter. I am not sure that the so-called Psalm-singers have any preëminence over the Episcopalians in their use of the Psalms in the public worship of God.

Are there, in this country, any signs of reaction in favor of the Psalms in the Churches that have abandoned them? For it must be admitted that in our country there has been an almost complete abandonment of the Psalter. It seems as if the choice lies between an exclusive use of the Psalms or an exclusive use of the hymns. Or may we hope for a general return to the Psalms, so as to give them some adequate place in their hymnody? Is there not a goodly number of persons in these Churches who are tired of sentimental, introspective songs, and who long for the objective, God-exalting Psalms and other songs that are modeled after them? They want the Psalms or something like them. They are ready to accept the estimate of Dr. Henry Van Dyke: "The Psalter represents the heart of man in communion with God through a thousand years of history. It is the golden treasury of lyrics, gathered from the life of the Hebrew people.

The fault, or at least the danger, of modern lyrical poetry is that it is too solitary and separate in its tone. It tends toward exclusiveness, over-refinement, morbid sentiment. Many Christian hymns suffer from this defect. But the Psalms breathe a spirit of human fellowship even when they are most intensely personal." They agree with Lowell Mason, whose name was in his day a synonym for appropriate sacred music, who said: "If there is any one thing connected with the manner of conducting the religious services of the Sabbath by the Puritan forefathers of New England which we ought to imitate or restore, it is that of singing—of singing the Psalms, of singing the Psalms by a choir consisting of the whole congregation, both young men and maidens, old men and children."

Are there any signs of such a return to the Psalms anywhere on the horizon? Is there a cloud of promise to be seen as big as a man's hand that may overspread the sky and let down showers of blessing by and by? About fifty years ago the Associate Reformed Church, through a committee of three men—Joseph Claybaugh, James Prestley, and David R. Kerr, memorable names in our history—communicated with the Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, asking coöperation in obtaining an improved version of the Psalms, adapted to the wants of the various Presbyterian bodies in our own country. We are very sure that with that Committee there would be nothing lacking in its presentation in either ability or courtesy. But the invitation was kindly yet definitely declined. We gladly note in contrast with this that nine Presbyterian Churches have been engaged for five years in earnest and continued effort to prepare a version of the Psalms, and the report to the Assemblies and Synods in 1904, signed by the Rev. Dr. Craven as Convener, says: "The Committee feel greatly encouraged by their success in overcoming difficulties and in attaining satisfactory results. They rejoice to believe that their work is attaining a degree of perfection that will make the Psalms much more acceptable to the Church than they would be in the imperfect forms which long usage has made so dear to

many." In their report to the Assemblies of 1905 they announce the completion of their work, and commend it to the Churches for examination and criticism. The preparation of this new metrical version of the Psalms is a sign of better days for them, and let us hope that it may clear the way for a union of the broken fragments of Presbyterianism in one grand harmonious body that may be wielded with increased effectiveness as one stick in the hand of the Lord.

The Hymnal so largely in use in the Presbyterian Churches contains perhaps a dozen selections from our Psalter, and they have been a welcome retreat to many a Psalm-singer in conducting services when away from home. But we note with pleasure again that a recent song-book published by the Winona Publishing House, from a modern center and source of Presbyterian influence, has incorporated sixty of the Bible Songs in the collection, and, further, that this book was used with eminent satisfaction at the Grove City (Pa.) Bible School during the summer of 1905. And may I not refer to the brave and rather startling utterance of Dr. Moffat, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church North, at Winona Lake in May, 1905, as a note of encouragement. Listen to him, for he is always worth hearing: "There is undoubtedly a widespread feeling in our churches that the United Presbyterians should come to us. We should not only ask them to come to us, but should make an earnest effort to go to them." Listen again, "I am not sure that we should not go a considerable ways toward their position in the use of the Psalms." I would not wish by these quotations to raise the expectation that Dr. Moffat is about to swing that great Presbyterian Church into the United Presbyterian lap, as he has sometimes swung it by masterly skill in directions which he approved. But he has at least committed himself to this: "I hope to see the day when all the different bodies of the Presbyterian faith will unite in giving us a revised, singable version of the Psalms." We have now, as we think, a singable version, singing itself into favor wherever it has a chance, and yet we are ready to respond to Dr. Moffat's expressed hope with all



heartiness, and say "Amen" to the proposal of a Union Version for the future, if it has not already come through the five years' labors of the Joint Committee already referred to.

The outlook for the Psalms will be a good deal what we Psalm-singers make it. I refer not to discussion, but to manifestation. Of course, discussion of the courteous, manly sort, without unfairness or rancor, is always legitimate, though the man, the circumstances, or the occasion may often make it unwise. But illustration, advertisement, artistic display, are always in place. Dr. W. W. Barr, who still lives in our affectionate remembrance, used to say in the *Evangelical Repository*: "The best argument in favor of our position is to get men to know the Psalms," and he advised the Board of Publication to advertise the Psalter in every prominent religious newspaper in the land. But the best advertisement is a good version, set to good music, and well sung. Give the Psalms fitting dress, and they will sing themselves into favor. It has been so in every period in which they have flourished. Beza's biographer says concerning the Reformed Church in France: "That the Reformed religion gained ground in no slight extent from the stress that was laid upon Psalm-singing is a fact that cannot be ignored; nor can it be denied that the Psalms owed much of their power to the suitable and attractive music to which they were set." We have already adverted to the requirement of the First Book of Discipline, that families "exercise themselves in Psalms" in preparation for the service in the congregation. The Westminster Assembly in the Directory it adopted likewise looks in the same direction when it says: "In singing of Psalms the voice is to be tunably and gravely ordered." It is a very excellent suggestion of the Joint Committee of the Churches: "It will be necessary for the Churches, jointly or otherwise, to have selected for each Psalm the best attainable music. If this will be done as competently as the importance of the matter demands, Psalm-singing will become more popular by far than at present."

We want the Psalms wedded to suitable music, music that will

wear instead of wearing out, and then let us learn in all our congregations and communities to sing them with skill and enthusiasm. We will make more melody in our hearts unto the Lord if the melody is in our voices as well. There is no devotion in strident, rasping, discordant tones. We are under obligation to God to render His praises in the most perfect form, as well as in the best spirit. No other commendation of the Psalms can equal this.

In 1904 Mr. Wanamaker attended a convention of the State Sabbath-school Association in Pittsburgh, and the Psalms were sung. He began in an attitude of decided opposition, and ended in one of approbation. He was won to the Psalms when he heard them well rendered, and ordered 2000 copies of the programme with music for use in the Bethany Sabbath-school. Other intelligent Christians will have a deeper appreciation of the Psalms because of the song service of this Convention occasion. It may even be questioned whether its influence will not be as wide and deep as that produced by the comprehensive and complete programme of addresses.

We have the best book. Let us endeavor to give it the best possible recommendation to the Christian public. It is a part of the Book of God and is for this reason better than the books of man. It was a weighty saying of Goethe: "There are many echoes in the world, but few voices." We have the voices, and not the echoes. Yea, we have the very Voice of God, and blessed will we be if we keep within the hearing of it. Dr. Robert Stuart MacArthur, the popular pastor of the Calvary Baptist Church, New York, closes a chapter on "The Matchless Poetry of the Bible" with this splendid tribute to the Psalms, with which I shall close: "It is not too much to say, even in the close of the nineteenth century, that the most popular poet in all the world is Israel's sweet singer. . . . We ought to bathe our souls in the atmosphere of these inspired songs. . . . If every other poet must be forgotten, let us baptize our souls in the poetry of the bards of the Bible. This poetry is the inspiration of heaven. This

poetry echoes the words of the Almighty. It sings the song of redemption. It chants the prophecy of heaven; and it blends, even as we sing it on earth, with the songs of saints and seraphs, of angels and archangels, whose voices are like the sound of many waters, as they sing in the immediate presence of their King the immortal and celestial song of Moses and the Lamb."