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THE SONGS TO BE USED IN THE WORSHIP OF GOD.

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EXAMINATION OF REASONS FOR EMPLOYING UNINSPIRED SONGS IN THE WORSHIP OF GOD.

According to our proposal, we may now proceed to notice the reasons of those who maintain that they have the authority of God, for employing uninspired songs in his worship, either in addition to the Psalms, or to their exclusion. These reasons we wish to state as fairly as possible.

1. One of the arguments usually relied on, to prove the Divine warrant for singing human composition in the worship of God, is the fact, that we are, in several of the Psalms, commanded to sing a *new* song, as in Ps. xcvi. 1; xcvi. 1. To this it is replied, (1.) A distinction is to be made between *singing* a new song, and *making* one—these passages say nothing respecting the making of songs. (2.) The command expressed in these passages was obeyed, when new inspired songs were presented to the church. (3.) Such passages generally speak of the introduction of the gospel among the heathen, and consequently, when converts from the heathen world would commence singing the Psalms, they would sing songs that were *new to them*; and doubtless, many who bring the above argument in favour of uninspired songs in Divine worship, would sing songs entirely *new to themselves*, should they commence singing the inspired songs. (4.) When worshippers sing a Psalm with new exercise of grace—when their soul and all that is within them is stirred up to bless and magnify the Divine name—when they see new applications of the Psalm to themselves and others; and for this purpose, they may confidently expect their heads to be anointed with fresh oil, Ps. xxiii. 5.—When they experience this newness and freshness in the Lord's song, which is common to it with all other parts of his word—then "they sing as if it were a new song." Uninspired songs have not the same exhaustless source of delight to the new creature—they become old and vanish away. (5.) If those passages would justify uninspired men to make songs for worship under the present dispensation; they must have justified, yea, required such men to compose songs under the former dispensation. There is not, however, in all the Old Testament, the most distant allusion to the singing of such songs in the worship of God with his approbation. Besides, the good Hezekiah must have disobeyed

the Divine command to make a new song, suited to the reformation which he was promoting, when instead of this, he enjoined the Divine praises to be celebrated in the words of David and Asaph, which had been written long before, 2 Chron. xxix. 30. A similar disregard of Divine authority is to be attributed to the apostle Paul, who on two occasions expressly enjoins the use of the Psalms, most of which had been in use a thousand years at least; Eph. v. 19; Col. iii. 16. A similar offence is perhaps to be ascribed to James, where he says, 'Is any merry, let him sing Psalms,' chap. v. 13. (6.) If the passages alleged authorize the composition of new uninspired songs for worship, we would ask, *how long or how often*, may they individually be used, and still retain the character of *new* songs? If any such songs may be used more than once, and still be truly *new*, why may not the same thing be said of inspired songs? It is believed, that uninspired songs or hymns have now been used for more than a century in some parts of the church; are they still new? if not, how greatly have those parts of the church erred in continuing them? If a song becomes old on being used twice or thrice, or even a thousand times; it is supposed, that even the world itself could not contain the songs that should be made to supply the wants of the church.

2. It is said, we may sing as well as pray in our own language. The truth of this proposition is not self-evident, and how it is to be proved we know not. Whatever we *may* do acceptably in the worship of God, depends on his appointment; for no mode of worship which he has not appointed, will be received with good will at his hand, Matt. xv. 9. That the assumption in this argument, viz. that we may sing as well as pray in uninspired composition is incorrect, will easily appear on considering the following things: God commands us to pray, but he has given us no set form of prayers—he has given us no prayer book; but while he commands us to sing his praise, he has given us a set form of Psalmody, as has been already shown. The Psalms were written out and given into the hand of a chief singer, and afterwards sung by the worshippers; but nothing of this kind do we find in relation to prayer. We never read in Scripture of prayers being composed and given into the hands of the person who led in the exercise of prayer. Had an inspired Psalm book been unnecessary, it would never have been given by that wise Sovereign, who does nothing in vain: had an inspired prayer book been needful, it would have been furnished by him. As the argument assumes on one side of the comparison, that extemporaneous prayers are warrantable, it is unnecessary to adduce any thing in proof of it. With respect to extemporaneous singing, it is perhaps sufficient to say, that it is impracticable by persons not inspired, and no attempts at extemporaneous singing in worship have we ever heard of. The nature of the case requires that what is sung should be submitted in some way before-hand to the minds of the worshippers, and afterwards sung; but in the case of prayer, the worshippers adopt the language as soon as presented to the mind. Thus it appears, that whether the songs be inspired or not, they must be composed before-hand; but in the case of prayer, no such necessity exists, the two cases brought together in the argument are not parallel; the conclusion, therefore, that we may sing as well as pray in our own or uninspired language does not follow. In the one case, the Object of our worship furnishes a form; in the other case, while he commands the performance of a duty, he has

given no forms, but rather a pattern—'After this manner pray ye,' Matt. vi. 9. In the latter case, then, we are at liberty to employ our own language in expressing our thoughts to him, so far as these are in accordance with his word; but in the other case, his giving of a form is a virtual prohibition of any thing else. His giving fire from heaven under the former dispensation, was a virtual prohibition of common fire for burning the sacrifices and incense, Lev. x. 1—3. His giving the pattern of a tabernacle, virtually prohibited any deviation from the pattern shown in the mount, Heb. viii. 5. The institution of certain sacraments in the church, is a virtual prohibition of every thing else under the same name, and for the same object. There is no command to repeat a prayer, as there is in reference to the Psalms—it is not said, sing after the manner of the Psalms, but in the identical words of the Psalms, 2 Chron. xxix. 30. Nor are we aware that a single prayer recorded in scripture is said there to have been afterwards repeated. After all, what has the appearance of an argument from analogy, is a begging of the question, or taking for granted the thing in dispute—it states that we *may* sing as well as pray in our language. To show that we may do this, other arguments must be used. To the consideration of these let us proceed.

3. It is alleged, that the book of Psalms is insufficient to express the various cases of individual believers, and of the church collectively, and therefore, in order to make up this deficiency, uninspired compositions must be introduced. To this argument it is replied, (1.) That uninspired songs will by no means express *all* the circumstances of believers, and of the church. Since God's work is perfect, and he knows our frame, it is to be presumed, that inspired songs will express all the circumstances of the church, and of her individual members, which need to be expressed. (2.) While this argument professes to advocate a mere supplement to the Psalms, yet we know that it is employed with the design of substituting the supplement in the place of the Psalms themselves.

4. It is said, that as Christ and his disciples sang a hymn, it is a precedent which we may lawfully follow. That this argument may prove it lawful to add to the church's songs of praise, it is necessary to prove first, that our Lord and his disciples sang an uninspired song. No proof of this, however, is attempted; but it is assumed, that the word hymn in our translation has this signification in scripture. This cannot be proved, but we shall have occasion to examine this in considering another argument. Suppose our Lord employed, in the celebration of the passover, a song which was not contained in scripture, still that would give us no such authority—he was a son over his own house—he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows—the Father gave not the Spirit by measure to him: what he did, therefore, had always the character of inspiration. But we, who are not endowed with such authority—we, who are of yesterday and know nothing, should not presume to imitate him in every thing. In the ordinary duties of the moral law, he has set us an example that we should follow his steps; but making songs to be sung in worship is no such duty. The passage, Matt. xxvi. 30, where it is said, they sang a hymn, might be rendered, having sung praise (*ψαλμοῦσιν*.) Neither this term itself nor the context can determine the character of the praise employed on that occasion, whether it was inspired or otherwise, whether it was composed for that occasion, or was one of the Psalms. As we are informed by ancient Jewish

writers, that it was customary to sing from the 113th to the 118th Psalms inclusive, at the time of celebrating the passover, and to this portion of the Psalms, they gave the name of the Hallel, or Hallel, and as some things in the 118th had special reference to Christ, it is quite likely that our Lord and his disciples sang the whole or a part of this.

5. The superior light of the present dispensation is urged as an argument in favour of the introduction of uninspired songs in worship. Our Lord places John Baptist on a level with the greatest prophet of the old dispensation, and then informs us, that the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he, Matt. xi. 11. From this comparison it is inferred, that the members of the church generally are now qualified, as well as the greatest of the ancient prophets, if not better than they, to furnish the church with songs of praise. Whatever the meaning of our Lord in the passage referred to may be, it is assuredly not, that however defective the education, and destitute of poetic talents any of his disciples may be, yet such person is better qualified than the greatest poets and prophets of the former dispensation to compose songs on sacred subjects. The error in this argument consists in applying absolutely, or in *all* respects, what is said of John Baptist and others, in *certain* respects, (a dicto secundum quid, ad dictum simpliciter.) John Baptist being the friend of the Bridegroom, was greater in honour than the Old Testament prophets, as these merely saw afar off, and foretold our Lord's coming in human nature; but John bare witness to him as already come: the least of the prophets and apostles in the kingdom of heaven, or new dispensation, were privileged with hearing the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, witnessing his miracles, the finishing of his work of humiliation, his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension to heaven, and were themselves endued with the power of working miracles. But in all this, there is nothing about the superior qualifications of uninspired men to compose songs to be used in worship, over those who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. "Our Lord added, that of all born of women (that is, of all mere men,) there had not arisen a greater than John Baptist—not one more holy, zealous, faithful and humble; not one who was employed in a more high and honourable service; not one who had been favoured with clearer views of evangelical truth; not one who had been thus distinguished by being himself the subject of prophecy. The least of the apostles, or New Testament prophets, who were called to establish the Messiah's kingdom, would be farther enlightened in the knowledge of his person, obedience, atonement and mediation; and be employed in a more distinguished service, and more abundantly endued with the Holy Spirit than John had been, and would possess miraculous powers which John did not." Scott on the place.

6. Another argument in favour of human composition being used in sacred praise, is founded on 1 Cor. xiv. 26, where the apostle uses the following language: "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a Psalm, hath a doctrine," &c. The correct view of this passage is given by a judicious commentator in the following words: "How then ought the public assemblies of Christians to be ordered and conducted? When they 'came together,' all who were endued with gifts eagerly seized the opportunity of exercising them, so that one would begin to sing a Psalm or spiritual song; another to discourse on some doctrine; another to speak in an unknown tongue;

another to declare some special revelation which had been made to him; and another to interpret what had been spoken. Thus several would speak at the same time, in different parts of the assembly, and while every one was more desirous to be heard and admired than to hear and be edified, the whole scene became confused, and the great end of their coming together was overlooked."—*Scott*. In the passage now under consideration, not a word is said about singing uninspired songs in worship; but the apostle treats merely about the confusion which existed among the Corinthians in conducting their religious exercises. While one had a Psalm (not a human composition, for there is not the least evidence that it was such, but it was one of the inspired collection,) which he desired to have sung, another at the same time had a doctrine to propose, and others had their favourite subjects to introduce into the assemblies of the Corinthians. Such a state of things produced confusion, and against this the apostle warns them, ver. 26—33. The having of a Psalm to be sung when some other exercise should occupy the assembly is a very different thing from the making of an uninspired song to be employed in worship. The very name, Psalm, which the apostle uses in the place referred to, shows that it was one of the inspired collection, known as the book of Psalms; for there is not the least evidence that the word Psalm ever signified any thing else among the sacred writers. This passage, then, fails to prove that uninspired songs, in the apostolic age, were used in the church. But as inspired persons were among the Corinthians at the time this epistle was written to them, suppose the Psalm mentioned was not one of the inspired collection known as the Psalms, but that it was a new inspired song, this would give us no authority to make songs for worship, seeing we are not inspired.

7. The argument which is considered most decisive in favour of uninspired compositions, in the worship of God, is the employment of the words hymns and spiritual songs, by the apostle in his epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, Eph. v. 19, and Col. iii. 16. There are two well established rules for determining the signification of a word in scripture: first, what is its signification in parallel places? secondly, what signification does the context require us to give it? As there are no other places where these terms are employed in the New Testament, we cannot bring any parallel passages by which to determine the meaning of the words hymns and spiritual songs, in the passages under consideration. Apply the second rule of interpretation to these passages, and what is the result? Will it show that uninspired songs are to be employed in the worship of God? We see nothing whatever in the context regarding the composition of such songs. Perhaps it will be said, that as the Colossians are directed to have the word of Christ dwelling in them richly, this direction has reference to their composing of hymns and spiritual songs by persons not inspired. Every person may see, however, that nothing is said here respecting the composing of hymns, either by inspired or uninspired men, but merely the using of hymns, &c. The word of Christ in the passage under consideration is supposed, by some, to signify the New Testament scriptures exclusively. Supposing this were the case, the authority to make songs of praise for the use of the church would not follow from it. But that this phrase does not signify the New Testament exclusively, is evident from the fact, that only a small part of the New Testament was in ex-

istence at the time these directions to the Ephesians and Colossians were given; and secondly, the Old Testament is justly called the word of Christ as he is God, and therefore the Author of the scriptures in common with the other persons of the Godhead—it was the Spirit of Christ that spake by the prophets of the Old Testament, 1 Pet. i. 11. Again, it may be said, that unless the apostle meant different things by the three terms employed, why did he employ them? is it not a tautology or vain repetition of the same idea, in different words? Were we unable to give any satisfactory answer to these questions, still the conclusion that uninspired songs are to be used in worship would by no means follow. These questions proceed on the supposition, that different terms in scripture *always* signify different things; this, however, is a mistake. Different terms are often employed in scripture to present the same subjects in different points of view. The apostle says, "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God," 1 Cor. iv. 1. Now ministers and stewards, here, do not signify different classes of persons, but the same persons differently considered. We might instance the mention of "prayers, supplications, intercessions and giving of thanks," 1 Tim. ii. 1. Commandments, testimonies and statutes are all mentioned in the same connexion, and the same thing, under different points of view, is denoted, 1 Chron. xxix. 19. Aaron was to confess over the head of the scape goat, "all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, in all their sins," Lev. xvi. 21. Let these examples, from multitudes, suffice to show, that the supposition that where different terms are employed, different things are signified, is not well founded. All the songs in the sacred collection were entitled to the name of Psalms, because they were occasionally sung to musical instruments; they were all worthy of the name of hymns, because they were songs of praise to God; they were all justly styled spiritual songs, because they were given by the Holy Spirit, they treat of spiritual things, and they are calculated to make those who employ them more and more spiritually minded. Besides, the name of Psalms, hymns, songs or odes, are found in the titles of the Psalms in the Septuagint translation, which it is generally agreed was in use in the churches founded by the apostles; it was natural then for the apostle to mention the compositions contained in the sacred collection, by the titles found in the translation commonly used. Should these remarks still be judged unsatisfactory, and it be insisted, that hymns and spiritual songs denote uninspired composition, we would ask what is the distinction between hymns and spiritual songs, according to the apostle's use of the term? Should there not be a spiritual song book, as well as a Psalm and hymn book? Suppose, then, that uninspired men compose a certain number of religious songs, and call them hymns, and compose others, and call them spiritual songs, how will it be known that these are the very kinds intended by the apostle? Where does he lay down any criterion by which the one might be distinguished from the other? If, then, two of the terms signify the same thing, why may not the three do so?

8. The last argument, which we would notice, in favour of uninspired songs in divine praise, is founded on the alleged practice of the early Christians. In answer to this, we remark, (1.) That we reject human opinions and practices, which may be found in any way contrary to scripture: "to the law and to the testimony, if they speak not

according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Even in the days of the apostles, corruptions both in principle and practice existed in some of the particular churches, as is evident from some of the epistles contained in the New Testament. The mystery of iniquity was already working. The simple fact of a thing being recorded in scripture will not prove it to be right; it must, in some way, have an expression of the divine approbation, or it must be in conformity with some general principle of scripture, before its adoption as a precedent. How much more cautious, then, should we be in adopting any principle or practice, mentioned in writings which have come into existence since the completion of the canon of scripture?

(2.) We remark, that the testimonies which we have seen brought forward from the writings of the second and third centuries, by no means prove, that hymns of human composition were employed by orthodox Christians of those times. The most important of these is, perhaps, that contained in Pliny's letter to the Emperor Trajan. He says he was informed that the Christians of Bethinia, *carmen Christo quasi Deo dicere*, "sung a song to Christ as God, or as a god." Now this language does not determine what was the origin of the Christians' songs, whether they were inspired or uninspired, and he does not profess to have obtained his information from the Christians themselves, but from apostates. If, indeed, the Psalms did not recognise Christ's divinity, this testimony from Pliny would render it probable that the Christians, to whom he refers, employed uninspired hymns in their worship; but this would neither prove the practice to be right nor to be universal in the church.

What is said about Paul of Samosata's discontinuing the uninspired hymns which had been in use in the church of Antioch, and substituting the Psalms of David in their place, as being more favourable to his heresy regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, is a gross perversion of the original record on the subject. What he abolished in that church was, the singing of the Psalms, as though they had been the work of modern authors, and what he substituted were songs in honour of *himself*. But our limits will not permit us to dwell on this or the other writings of that time.

Having thus examined the arguments which are adduced in favour of the use of uninspired compositions in the praise of God, and having found them insufficient to sustain such usage, we shall now state some

OBJECTIONS TO UNINSPIRED HYMNS IN THE WORSHIP OF GOD.

We are not, however, to be understood as objecting to such compositions for any purpose except the employment of them in worship. If the sentiments which they contain be in accordance with scripture, they may, like prose compositions of like character, be used with similar edification. In opposition to human composition in divine worship, we remark,

1. That as they are unauthorized, the singing of them for such purpose is will-worship—it is sinful. How sinful would it be to add to the number of the sacraments, or to change the sacramental signs of Christ's institution for others, which uninspired men might prefer! How would it shock the sensibilities of Christians, should any one substitute for the song of Solomon, a human composition, which the author would pretend was better adapted to the purpose of edifica-

tion, than that given by inspiration of the Spirit! How sinfully did Ahaz act, when in place of God's altar, he had one erected similar to that which he had seen at Damascus! 2 Kings, xvi. 10—15. The leprosy of Uzziah should warn people against doing, in worship, any thing which the Object of it has not commanded, 2 Chron. xxvi. 16—21. Notwithstanding the good intentions of Uzzah in taking hold of the ark to keep it steady, how did the divine displeasure manifest itself against him, for performing in religion, an act for which he had not divine authority? 2 Sam. vi. 6, 7. We should be deterred from altering divine institutions, when we consider the punishment inflicted on the sons of Aaron, the saint of God, because they offered strange fire, Lev. xvi. 1—3. With respect to the state of individual persons who make or use human compositions in divine worship, we have nothing to say—to their own master they stand or fall. True believers may build on Christ, the foundation, wood, hay, stubble; but in doing so, they shall suffer loss—all those materials or human devices shall be burnt, 1 Cor. iii. 9—15. Though Aaron was a saint, he made a golden calf as a means of worship; and though he obtained pardon, vengeance was taken on his inventions, Ps. xcix. 6—8. To add any thing to what God has instituted, or to substitute any thing in place of what he has appointed, is constructively to reflect on his wisdom or goodness, as though we knew better than he, what would be pleasing to him and profitable to ourselves.

2. We object to such compositions because they cannot be sung in faith. Being composed by fallible men, they may contain error: the thought of this begets doubts in the mind. Indeed faith cannot be exercised without a divine command or promise. How refreshing is it to reflect, that in singing the scripture Psalms, we are singing what God himself has given us for that purpose! Faith cannot be exercised in the performance of any thing as a duty, without the divine appointment of that thing. The sons of Aaron, who offered strange fire, could not exercise faith in regard to the acceptance of their service, seeing they offered fire "which the Lord commanded them not." To expect acceptance in using unauthorized means of worship, for example, sacraments not appointed in the divine word, would be presumption, and not faith. The apostle tells us, in regard to the eating of those meats, between which the ceremonial law made distinction, that unless persons eat in faith or belief that it was lawful for them to do so, they committed sin, Rom. xiv. 23.

3. The introduction of human composition leads to the disparagement of the Old Testament, and, consequently, to the weakening of the foundation of the Christian church, for she is built on the foundation of the *prophets*, as well as of the apostles, Eph. ii. 20. In order to show that the Old Testament is disparaged by the advocates of uninspired hymns, we might refer to the writings of various individuals, but our space forbids the furnishing of the evidence. The darkness and imperfections of the old dispensation are greatly exaggerated, in order to supplant the Psalms and substitute the works of men in their place. The bad conduct of David in a few cases, is brought against him, in order to disparage his writings. It might be thought sufficient, that Shimei should have heaped reproaches on him during his life; but it must be a matter of deep regret, that the man after God's own heart, "the sweet psalmist of Israel," should still be pursued with similar in-

vectives. If the personal sins of David gave character to the book of Psalms, they would not only be unfit to be sung, but even to be read; and such a supposition is applicable to all the other books of scripture. From the manner in which reference is sometimes made to the gospel or New Testament, and from the fact that it is used much more frequently in the pulpit and in the family, than the Old Testament is used, we apprehend that this state of things is, in a great measure, brought about by the zeal of some in favour of what they call a gospel Psalmody, and in opposition to the use of the scripture Psalms in worship.

4. The introduction of uninspired composition in worship is adapted to the propagation of error. In praying to God, we have the promise of his Spirit to aid us, Zechariah xii. 10, Rom. viii. 26; but we have no promise of his aid in composing hymns. Various denominations of Christians who employ such compositions, it is to be expected will introduce their peculiar views into their songs of praise, and as their views of doctrine are discordant, they cannot all be scriptural. Thus it appears, then, that the introduction of error by such compositions is inevitable. Such error, too, will perhaps be associated in the mind with the earliest recollections of a religious nature. It stands forth as a historical fact, that those churches which adhere most steadily to the doctrines of the reformation, are they that adhere to the use of the scripture Psalms. All error, as it contradicts the testimony of God speaking to us in his word, is highly dishonouring to him. Neither can it produce a sense of sin, or purity of heart or life. It is by obeying the opposite truth, that persons purify their souls, 1 Pet. i. 22. To avoid the propagation of error, to promote the divine glory, the sanctification and comfort of believers, those who employ uninspired songs in worship ought to return to the exclusive use of the scripture Psalms.

5. Lastly, the employment of uninspired songs in worship, is adapted to the extension and perpetuation of divisions in the church. This objection necessarily follows from the preceding, because whatever tends to corrupt the church, tends at the same time to divide her. The songs of which we speak, differ in doctrinal sentiment, as well as in regard to literary merit; and as difference of opinion often exists in regard to these things, discord respecting the collection to be introduced into a particular denomination, congregation, praying society, or family, is likely to be the consequence. But what might thus be expected, has, in some instances at least, actually taken place. Supposing that the different religious denominations should express their different religious sentiments in their hymn books, such diversity would be a barrier in the way of their union as long as it existed. But should all agree to use a correct version of the Psalms, this would be common ground on which to unite. It would be well for those who desire the outward unity of Christ's mystical body to reflect what influence uninspired songs in worship have in marring that unity. To be chargeable with this sin, is to be chargeable with one of no small magnitude. The divisions of Christians form a stumbling-block in the way of serious inquirers after religion, and give occasion of triumph to infidels. "Offences must needs come, but wo to that man through whom the offence cometh."

We have seen from the preceding discussion, that the Psalms are appointed by the Head of the church to be used under the present dis-

penation, and that uninspired hymns have no such appointment; it may be proper now to inquire,

IS IT RIGHT TO MAKE AND USE AN IMITATION OF THE PSALMS?

No attempt, or even a proposal of the kind, was ever made in the Christian church until the last century, when a distinguished individual had the boldness to imitate this portion of the word of God. Had the author of the imitation employed a term expressive of his meaning, he should have called his work an improvement of the Psalms, because finding fault with the sentiments of the inspired songs of Zion, he made free to alter them, and, to be consistent, he must have considered his alterations as improvements on the Psalms. But what is an *imitation* of a thing? does it not imply inferiority to the thing imitated? Jewels, costly articles of apparel, furniture, medicine, &c., are sometimes imitated; but if the imitations are detected, their inferiority is at once felt and acknowledged. Coin and paper currency are sometimes imitated, but such imitations are considered as counterfeits or forgeries, and those who make or circulate them, when detected, are considered guilty of a high misdemeanor against the public interests. There is no command given in scripture, nor any directions respecting the making of an imitation, or alteration of the Psalms, or any other portion of the divine word. Such imitation is therefore wholly unauthorized by the glorious Author of the Bible: on the contrary, he has published the most severe interdicts against all such alterations, Deut. xii. 32; Prov. xxx. 6; Rev. xxii. 18, 19. In the law of Moses, it was supposed, that some might attempt to make an improvement on the ointment to be used in consecrations, but a severe interdict was issued against all such presumptuous attempts, though perhaps something might be pleaded in their favour from the improvements that might be made in arts or sciences, Ex. xxx. 37, 38. If it is right to alter the book of Psalms to suit the New Testament dispensation, why not all the other books of the Old Testament? why not especially alter the book of Leviticus, and make it speak the language of the New Testament? As an imitation of any thing is confessedly inferior to the thing imitated, it must, according to a general rule of scripture, be wrong to use them: the rule is this, that we should serve the Lord with the best. The first ripe fruits, which were usually the best, were to be given to the Lord, and a curse is pronounced on him who had in his flock a male, and vowed, but sacrificed to the Lord a corrupt thing, Mal. i. 7, 8 and 13, 14.

MAY OTHER PORTIONS OF THE SCRIPTURES, BESIDES THE PSALMS, BE VERSIFIED AND SUNG IN WORSHIP?

In answer to this inquiry, our limits will not allow us to say much: we answer in the negative, however, because, (1.) It does not appear from scripture that any other portion of the divine word was used in the stated worship of God. We have songs which were made for some particular occasions, such as that in Ex. xv. and Judges v., but it does not appear that they were used in public stated worship; but the Psalms were given for the express purpose of being sung in public stated worship, and for the sake of convenience, they were collected into a book. (2.) We have the substance of the other scripture songs in the book of Psalms, as could easily be shown. (3.) Should we be-

gin to versify other portions of the scriptures, where should we stop? Shall we, who are of yesterday, and know comparatively nothing, say that such and such portions of scripture are fit to be sung, but others are unfit? Shall we say that hitherto we may go, but no farther, in our versification of the scriptures to be sung in worship? (4.) The want of divine authority for such use of the other books of scripture for such purpose, will be an insuperable objection in the mind of him who inquires, "Lord, what wilt *thou* have me to do?" Certain things were appointed for certain purposes about the tabernacle and temple; and it would be great temerity in any, to employ other things for those purposes—all things were to be according to the pattern shown in the mount, Ex. xxv. 40.

CIRCUMSTANCES IN RELATION TO SINGING.

(1.) All persons who are capable of it, should sing, though their voices be not melodious. All ages and sexes are commanded to engage in this exhilarating exercise, Ps. cxlviii. 12. When choirs take the place of congregations, in performing this part of worship, the glory of such worship has departed. (2.) All should sing as *skilfully* as possible, and so they should cultivate, to some extent, their musical powers. The obligation to *sing* skilfully is not less than it was to play in that manner, Ps. xxxiii. 3. (3.) The voice should be extended so as to be easily heard, unless it be very harsh and unmanageable; in this case, a lower tone will be better for the edification of others. See Ps. xxxiii. 3; lxxxi. 1; cl. 5. (4.) The music employed should, in general, be grave: "solemn sounds" are required, Ps. cxii. 3. But as some variety in this respect would seem reasonable, persons who lead in this exercise should select tunes adapted to the sentiments of the Psalm; the most grave tunes should be selected for such Psalms as express the afflictions of Christ, or the members of his mystical body, and more sprightly tunes should be employed in singing of his triumphs, and the triumphs of his followers. (5.) It is most for edification that such tunes be employed as the worshippers are acquainted with, so that all may the more readily engage in the exercise of singing. Repeating tunes we deem to be improper, as they are not necessary, in order to sing with the heart and with the understanding; but on the contrary, they appear to be vain repetitions, and being so viewed, their introduction will be wounding to the feelings of many of the godly, and a source of strife.* (6.) Where all the worshippers have not books or cannot read, it is proper that the recommendation of the Westminster divines in the directory for public worship be observed, namely, that the Psalm be given out by lines. But on these subjects, for the peace and edification of the church, much forbearance is necessary—"Let all your things be done with charity," 1 Cor. xvi. 14. (7.) The apostolic direction to sing with the heart and with the understanding should be deeply impressed on the minds of the worshippers, 1 Cor. xiv. 15. To comply with this direction, a book may be of use even where the Psalm is previously known, for in this way the connexion of the words will be more readily perceived, and the thoughts will not so readily wander. To perform this heavenly exercise aright, there is need that the soul and all that is within it be stirred up, Ps. ciii. 1, 2. The sentiments of

* It may be stated that Synod has not taken any judicial action on this, or the accompanying particulars.

the Psalm should be duly considered, and the graces of the Spirit corresponding with these sentiments should be exercised, particularly faith in the promises as made to us, and rejoicing in God, the Father, Son and Spirit, as our God in covenant, with all his infinite fulness as our sure portion.