

**REASONS FOR AND AGAINST SINGING OF PSALMS**

**in Private or Publick Worship,**

**Considered with Candor.**

**wherein the Ground of that Controverted Practice is impartially laid open.**

Inscribed to the Baptist Congregations in Great Britain and Ireland.  
by David Rees

Job 34:32: *"That which I see not, teach thou me."*

1 Cor. 14:26: *"How is it then, brethren, when ye come together; every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation; hath an interpretation? Let all things be done to edifying."*

**LONDON 1737.**

## THE DEDICATION

Highly honoured, and much esteemed and beloved, It was no intemperate zeal that led my mind to the discussion of this subject, nor the least inclination to contend with my brethren about a point that had been long debated in the churches. It was rather a humble desire to place this practice in such a light as I had not observed to have been done by others before.

For the considerations enforced herein, are mostly drawn from the volume of the New Testament, and the stress is laid, where indeed it ought to be, upon gospel footing.

Not that I give up my right to argue from the topic of morality and natural obligation, and from the early songs of the Old Testament, as of Moses and the Israelites, of Miriam and the women, and of Deborah, &c., and also from the numerous prophecies in the body of the psalms and the prophets, declaring that the nations of the gentile world should, in the days of the Messiah, sing the praises of God. I have omitted these things only because I apprehended that they might be more easily baffled and eluded by men of nice skill in managing their part in opposing this practice.

Could I have found other objections that were material or any way set off with more strength and advantage, they should have been inserted and fairly examined. I have hinted as many as occurred to my mind, and put them in different views by branching and ranging of them out, on purpose to reach the meaning of the scrupulous party. But my chief design was to reason the matter with plain Christians in a clear manner, without puzzling and incumbering the argument; and without sparing or concealing anything that I could recollect to the purpose. Therefore it is to the perusal of unprejudiced enquirers after truth that I affectionately commit the small ensuing essay.

**REASONS FOR AND AGAINST SINGING OF PSALMS  
IN PRIVATE OR PUBLIC WORSHIP  
considerd with candour.**

WHAT is meant by singing, is so well known amongst us that it may seem needless for me to explain it. Singing is only speaking with a tuned voice; or it is lengthening the sound of the words by a tuneful and melodious pronunciation. And since I design a short treatise about the practice of singing in divine worship, I shall reduce the substance of what I have to offer to these following heads:

I. We frequently read in the New Testament of singing psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. Thus, our Saviour and his disciples, *Matt. 26:30*, sung an hymn; Paul and Silas sang in the prison, *Acts 16:25*; the apostle Paul said that he would sing with the spirit and with the understanding also, *1 Cor. 14:15*. A psalm was brought in to their publick worship by the Corinthian Christians, among their doctrines, their revelations and their interpretations, *1 Cor. 14:26*. The Ephesians were directed to speak to themselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in their hearts to the Lord, *Eph. 5:19*. And the Colossians are exhorted to teach and admonish one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in their hearts to the Lord, *Col. 3:16*. And the apostle James exhorts such as are spiritually merry or joyful, to sing psalms, *James 5:13*.

II. By a song, we commonly understand some number of words and sentences put together under certain rules and in certain measures in order to be sung. Now a psalm signifies in plain English a song, an hymn signifies a song of praise, an ode signifies a song; so that psalming, hymning and oding, all of them signify singing. Again; to psalm it, to hymn it, or to ode it, is, in proper English, to sing it. I choose to lay things open after this manner that I may avoid making use of Greek words in Greek characters, and in their strict terminations; since my intention is to treat with the plain and honest reader in the most familiar and undisguised manner.

It will be found, upon impartial examination, that what we have translated "psalms" and "hymns," do properly and truly signify songs; and what the Greek Testament expresses by "psalming" and "hymning," does really and truly signify singing. And the translation may be easily justified. I mention this on purpose to those honest and well-meaning people, who are prejudiced against the practice of singing in the worship of God under the gospel, because they think that the passages in the New Testament relating to singing are not fairly and justly translated. They oppose the practice upon this very account, imagining that we who assert the lawfulness and duty of singing, take things too much upon trust, and are imposed upon in this affair. Particularly they suspect that the word "hymn" does only signify praise, absolutely in itself, not a song of praise; and that "hymning" intends only bare praising, which may be done by the simple pronunciation of words, without tuning and singing of them.

In answer to this, I propose that there is no surer way to determine this point, and to satisfy our own minds and consciences, than by consulting the New Testament, and Greek authors, thereby to know what sense the words "hymn" and "hymning" bear in them. I have taken some pains, according to my small talent and skill this way; and I cannot find, both by consulting some of the learned living, and some deceased authors of eminent knowledge in the Greek tongue, but that an "hymn" signifies a song, or a song of praise, and that "hymning" intends the singing of it. If any man can convince me by fair testimonies out of received Greek authors, that things are not so, and that our translation is faulty in this matter, I shall be ready to acknowledge my error, and to be of his opinion; for I am always open to conviction, and willing to take that side on which truth appears to be. Till this is done, I shall justify and vindicate our translation by maintaining that an "hymn" is a song, or a song of praise, and that "hymning" means singing of it. I have been more express about this business, because I am sensible that many sincere people have laboured under groundless scruples upon this score, and been themselves too credulous in following others who have condemned the translation, and so have been confirmed in their prejudice upon that mistake, when perhaps this affair only wants examining to the bottom, and their minds would soon be set at liberty, and they would easily see their way to their duty.

III. Now, "psalm" and "psalms" being thus found to be Greek terms, and often read in the New Testament, it may not be amiss to take notice that we read there also not only of psalms in general; but of the second psalm in particular, and of the Book of Psalms; by which we are to apprehend that book which stands in our Bibles between the Book of Job and Solomon's Proverbs, consisting of 150 psalms, or hymns, or odes, composed by David, King of Israel, and other sacred and inspired penmen mentioned therein.

These excellent and divine songs were originally written in Hebrew, but were translated into Greek together with the rest of the Old Testament, by the seventy-two translators, who at the request of

Ptolemy Philadelphus, King of Egypt, were employed to perform that famous work. In the original Hebrew titles of the Psalms, there are three different words found, viz. *Mizmor*, *Tehillah*, *Schir*; and in the Greek translation of the afore-mentioned seventy-two interpreters, there are in the Greek titles of the psalms three words used also, viz. *Psalm*, *Hymn*, *Ode*; and these three last are generally supposed and allowed to answer to the abovesaid three Hebrew titles. This Greek version being finished, and the Greek tongue mightily spreading, and prevailing, it became very acceptable, and was much used, far and near; and indeed it proved a very happy means, in the hand of providence, to prepare the way for the reception of the knowledge of Christ, and of his gospel in the world.

For this translation having gained acceptance for the space of above two hundred, or rather near three hundred years before our Saviour's birth, it has been generally and justly observed by learned men that the inspired writers of the New Testament, who all wrote in Greek, have made much use of it; and even followed it in a visible manner, when they had occasion to quote many passages out of the Old Testament. This opened a door for the admission of the preaching and writings of the apostles among the scattered Jews and Gentiles, where this translation had got footing. And certain it is that the apostle Paul has made use of the three Greek words, which the interpreters chose to fix as titles to the psalms instead of the original Hebrew ones; and he names them as titles well known, because they had been, as has been remarked, of a long standing in this version, viz. *Psalms*, *Hymns*, and *Odes*; therefore it is more than probable that he borrowed them from their translation, only adding 'spiritual' to the word *Odes*.

Thus he applies these titles in the New Testament in his epistle to the Ephesians, *Eph. 5:18,19*. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual odes," or songs, &c. And in his epistle to the Colossians, *Col. 3:16*, "Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual odes," or songs, &c.

It may easily be observed in these places that our English translators have retained the two former words, viz. "psalms" and "hymns;" but they have thought fit to render the word "odes" by "songs." Now I think it will be very difficult to assign a fair and just reason why the apostle should make use of three words, and the very same three words, which the seventy-two interpreters had chosen before; unless he designed to refer the Christian churches to the Book of Psalms, where these very terms are fixed as titles to the several divine songs contained therein. These Old Testament titles give us, I think, great light into the meaning of the apostle, when he applies these denominations in the New; why should the apostle direct and, as it were, lead the churches by the hand to the practice of singing, by laying before them the titles of David's psalms, unless he meant that these should be the very songs, which they might warrantably and chiefly make use of under the gospel, as the subject matter of their singing? For my own part I am well satisfied that this was the direct design of the apostle in this affair, and that he was influenced and guided by the Holy Ghost to this very end and purpose. It may be proper to add my reasons, and they are these following:

1. There are no other songs that go under these denominations. How should the churches of Ephesus and Colossae know what the apostle intended by these terms, without he had explained himself, and shewn what particular songs he meant by these phrases? Which he has not done, as taking it for granted that the terms were sufficiently known to them already; or at least might soon and easily be known, because they made use of the Greek Old Testament, where the Book of Psalms was, and to which they might have recourse, to examine the passages he fetched and quoted from thence, in his powerful preaching to them and others.

This was Paul's usual method, he reasoned at Thessalonica, three sabbath-days with them, out of the scriptures; and the Bereans are commended as being more generous and noble, in that they searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so. And it is added, "Therefore many of them believed: Also of the honourable women which were Greeks, and of men not few." Now the Greek tongue was the common language in these places, even among the Jews who dwelt here, as well as the others: Therefore those scriptures which they searched, must, in all rational probability, if not certainty, be the Greek version of the Old Testament. But, in my apprehension, there is not the least doubt to be made that this was the word of Christ, which the same apostle would have to dwell richly in the Colossians, as I shall endeavour to make further appear. Therefore,

2. We are to consider that as the scripture, in variety of places, is called the word of God, and the word of the Lord, so in the exhortation to the Colossians it is called the word of Christ: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual odes (or songs) singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." What word of Christ could be, which they might furnish and fill themselves with, to dwell in them, to teach and admonish one another withal, in psalms, hymns, and odes? There was no other written word of Christ, fit for

them to understand and peruse for these purposes, but the translation of the seventy-two interpreters here insisted on; for the Colossian church chiefly consisted of gentile converts; as appears, *Col. 1:27*, "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you the hope of glory." Colossae was a noted city in Asia Minor, near to Hierapolis; and Laodicea; the native language of the inhabitants was Greek, and therefore the Greek version was excellently suited to their hands.

3. The Old Testament, in divers places where there are songs recorded, and the Book of Psalms in a particular manner, would readily furnish them with such materials as the apostle pointed at, and directed to. There were parcels and portions here to be found, that would fully and exactly answer these several denominations.

4. As the private Christians among the Colossians were not required to devise or invent new psalms, hymns, and odes, but to take those already indited and intitled in the word of Christ; so indeed they were not, or at least they are not said to be capable of such compositions. They had neither authority, nor ability that we read of, for such undertakings, and yet the meanest members or believers among them are included and comprehended in the number of those who are bound in duty to teach and admonish one another, in psalms, hymns, and odes; for the inscription of the epistle is, "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colossae," *Col. 1:2*. Now where could they find these songs? There are no footsteps nor records of the Corinthian psalm, composed or suggested by the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit in some particular person or persons; I say, there is no account of this being handed and transmitted to other churches, for their use and service. Besides, the Corinthian psalm is never called an hymn, nor an ode. Therefore if all, even the meanest sort among the Ephesian and Colossian private members, could not compose psalms, hymns and odes, nor borrow them from the Corinthians, or some other churches, then it necessarily follows that they must have recourse to the Old Testament, especially to the Book of Psalms, whence, and from whence only, they could be plentifully supplied with those necessities, to perform the duty required of them.

5. The Word of Christ, recommended to dwell in them richly, is chiefly and most rationally to be understood of the Book of Psalms, in this passage of the apostle; for it was all dictated by the Spirit of Christ, as well as the rest of the scriptures, through the several parts thereof; and the psalms, in abundance of places, have to do with Christ in a most conspicuous manner. The royal psalmist of Israel was a most eminent and illustrious type of our glorious Lord. Very many of the psalms treated and spoke of Christ in the most direct and professed sense; describing his person, glory and majesty; his frame, temper and spirit; his enemies, sorrows, sufferings, and death; his reviving, and resurrection from the dead; his ascension into heaven, leading captivity captive, and giving gifts unto men, his sitting at God's' right hand, till all his enemies are become his footstool. And indeed it may be surely observed of the Book of Psalms, that though the natural history of Christ's life and actions be best recorded by the evangelists, yet his heavenly spirit, disposition and frame, and his prayers, wrestlings, strong cries and groans, are best described and clearest perceived and seen, either in the holy transports and divine extasies of joy, or else in the mournful dejections and most affecting complaints of divine desertions expressed by the Jewish psalmist.

6. The Book of Psalms is so ordered by divine wisdom that it is divided into such distinct, short, and methodical parcels as may the more easily be learned and retained in the memory. As the psalms are short lessons easily got, so they are the fittest parts of the "word of Christ to dwell in us richly." And they are excellently well adapted to answer what the apostle demanded of the Ephesians and Colossians; for as they are soon laid up in the treasury of the mind, so they are readily brought out from thence upon any occasion, to teach, admonish, and comfort ourselves and others. And it is certain that the devout Jews of old delighted themselves in these divine poems, after this laudable manner. And indeed they might well cause us Christians to blush in this respect, for they so inculcated the scriptures in general to their children, that they got them almost by heart, or memory. And if Paul and Silas in the dark dungeon had not immediate hymns inspired and suggested to them, yet they had sufficient stock of holy matter treasured up in their memories out of the Book of Psalms, to praise God with, by hymning or singing to solace and refresh their spirits, and to express their faith, and holy confidence and joy, even in the distressed circumstances they are described to be in. And there is no condition of life that we can fall into, whether prosperity or adversity; freedom or imprisonment, joy or sorrow, credit or disgrace, health or sickness, youth or old age, strength or weakness, high or low, rich or poor, in comfort or in distress, in regard to body or soul, as to this world, or that which is to come; I say there can be no instance of life, but a parallel may be found suited and adapted to us in the Book of Psalms. For these reasons it is, to this excellent and inexhaustible treasury, that I apprehend the apostle directs the Christian churches to resort, in order to have the word of Christ, to dwell in them richly, that they might be able to teach and admonish one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual odes, or songs, singing, &c.

Now I think that the objections most likely to be made against what I have advanced in this place, are these following:

*Objection I.* The Colossians might compose their own psalms, hymns, and odes, or songs, by immediate inspiration, or the extraordinary influence of the Holy Spirit.

I answer, We have not the least mention of it, that they had either authority or capacity for so doing, though some among the Corinthians might have gifts that way for the time being. Therefore there seems to be no rational and visible ground to go upon, in supporting this objection.

*Objection II.* They might be enjoined, or exhorted to teach and admonish one another with some matter of instruction, out of the psalms, and hymns, and songs of David, by speaking one to another, without singing.

I answer, They are exhorted to do it expressly by singing; and this flatly overthrows the objection.

*Objection III.* This singing is only metaphorical; viz. singing in the heart only, without pronouncing the words, as tuned with the tongue and voice.

I answer, If the singing here mentioned was to begin and end in the heart, or to terminate purely in the mind, and was not to come out by the tuneful speaking of the tongue and voice, then I may well urge they could not teach and admonish one another by it; for who can be instructed with what another person keeps closely within his own heart? This would at once destroy the whole intention of teaching and admonishing, or any way edifying one another; and indeed it is contrary to common sense, as well as repugnant to the plain design and meaning of this passage;.

*Objection IV.* The exhortation to the Ephesians runs in another strain of expressions, *Eph. 5:19*, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. From whence it is concluded that all this business is to be done only in the heart, and to be known to none else but the Lord.

I answer,

1. That if this was the true and proper meaning of the apostle, then one would have imagined that he would have expressed himself to this purpose, viz. "Ruminare, meditare, and conceive psalms, hymns, and odes, in your own hearts, but do not speak a word or syllable; compose, contemplate and comprehend divine songs mentally, within yourselves, but pronounce nothing vocally, nor utter anything that may be heard by others."

2. This could not be the apostle's meaning, for he would hereby palpably contradict himself, in his exhortation to the Colossians: "Teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." This would certainly be an irreconcilable contradiction. Therefore we must understand the direction to the Colossians as explanatory of the other passage of the Ephesians, and then the sense will amount to what is easy and natural; thus "teaching and admonishing," and so stirring up and edifying one another by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs having your hearts first filled and seasoned with grace, to praise the Lord in this way.

*Objection V.* Though it should be allowed, for some peculiar reasons, that they might speak to themselves in a tuned voice, and even sing privately, in a proper sense, for their own spiritual recreation and refreshment, yet after ages were neither obliged nor warranted to do the like, without being guilty of will-worship.

I answer, That very few considerate people have ever denied the lawfulness of private, personal singing of psalms, for the exaltation and improvement of their spiritual joy. The scripture is so express in this case, that there is no just room to dispute the licence and warrant, or rather command for it. "Is any man afflicted, let him pray; is any merry, let him sing psalms," *James 5:13*. If private prayer continues to be a duty, then upon the same foot of authority, private singing continues to be a duty also; and there is no probable way that I can conceive of, to elude the force of this injunction of the apostles.

*Objection VI.* Singing might be a duty in those extraordinary times when they might sing those psalms that were infused, or suggested, to them immediately by the Holy Ghost. But since those extraordinary gifts are ceased, private singing ought to cease also.

I answer, That the apostle James does not mention, nor seem to mean and intend any extraordinary singing, nor any extraordinary gifts for singing, nor any extraordinary mirth or joy. Afflictions were always common and ordinary to the people of God, in all ages; and prayer prescribed as the ordinary relief and support under them. On the other hand, spiritual mirth or joy, was also common and ordinary to religious people, in all times; and here singing of psalms is prescribed under the gospel, to give vent to that joy, and to praise God for it, by singing psalms. They are both ordinary duties, and equally binding. They are both indefinitely enjoined, without limitation or restriction to any space or age of gospel times. These duties therefore must stand or fall together.

*Objection VII.* The apostle James, in the very next words, recommends anointing sick persons with oil, that they might be raised and restored by that ceremony and prayer, *James 5:14*. This was extraordinary, and so might the singing be, in the place referred to.

I answer,

1. It was very usual for the inspired writers to go off immediately, from one topic to another, even to a thing of a different nature; without leaving any visible distinction between them. Whoever will observe the traces of the inspired writings, will easily find many instances of this kind.

2. I do not think (with submission to better judgments) that this business of anointing with oil, joined with fervent prayer of godly men, according to direction, was so confined to the primitive church, as that the practice ought to be altogether discontinued in our day; for if it were used cautiously and very prudently, attended with humble and fervent prayer in certain cases, perhaps we might see some godly and eminently useful men in the churches raised and restored out of illness in a speedier, and more evident manner than they are by the common and ordinary use of natural means. But be this as it will, it does not in the least affect the business of private singing.

*Objection VIII.* Every ordinary Christian, in a joyful frame, is not capable of conceiving and composing a psalm or spiritual song; how therefore should he sing?

I answer, It is not required of him that he should be able to do this; and therefore, let him go to the word of Christ; contained in the psalms of David and others, and he will find enough of holy matter, composed ready to his hands, and variety of choice instances befitting him, and all other godly persons. I have shewn before that the apostle Paul directs us, under the gospel; to these parcels or portions for our use.

*Objection IX.* This is binding of us down to stinted forms, which are not lawful.

I answer,

1. That they are soon made lawful, if the apostle, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, sends us to them; for they are parts and portions of the "form of sound words" and matter, dictated long ago to his servants the prophets, by the same infallible Spirit. This will sufficiently secure and justify us in making use of these divinely stinted or prescribed forms, thus recommended to us.

2. Singing, ever since it was instituted and established in the worship and church of God, was performed by set forms of words. Songs were always made or composed beforehand, on purpose to be sung. There are many instances in the titles of the psalms, where the song is first prepared, and then sent to the Chief Musician or Singer, for him to take care of the orderly and due performance. *See Psalms 75, 77, 80 &c.* King Hezekiah and his princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph the seer, *2 Chron. 29:30*.

Our Saviour and his disciples sang an hymn, *Matt. 26:30*; which, by the phrasiology of the New Testament, and the custom and language of the Jews, should be some portion of the Book of Psalms. And there is not the least colour of reason to believe that our Lord composed an hymn on purpose at this time; but took that which was well known among the Jews, and commonly used at the celebration of the Passover, and applied it to his own institution, adopting it and the singing of it to gospel worship, in his own divine person and example. Upon this foundation, which I take to be a very safe

one, there can be no danger in making use of set forms of words in singing; nor is there any just room to inveigh against them, where there are such authorities and examples to defend and warrant us in the practice; and where the word of God and of Christ is the subject matter of the song; and that we are directed to take what psalm, or hymn, or spiritual song we please, out of this word that endureth forever.

3. If singing, as an act of worship, was to cease when extraordinary gifts of conceiving extemporary psalms ceased; and if, to avoid set forms, we are entirely to lay aside all singing, then I fairly urge that we are to lay aside all praying, all doctrine, interpretation and revelation; for all these things were extraordinary gifts at that time among the Corinthians. For these persons, in their prayers were actuated by immediate influence; they did not acquire ability to pray, or the gift of prayer, by degrees, and by learning one of another, and by exercise and use, as we ordinarily do. Nay, they prayed by a miraculous gift, in an unknown tongue, *1 Cor. 14:14*, where the apostle rectifies the abuse of this gift. Again, neither had they their doctrine by study and application of thought, as we commonly have ours. Nor did they arrive at the faculty of expounding and interpreting one language by another, by a painful learning the rudiments of those languages, as we are obliged to do. No, all things were immediately infused into them in a miraculous manner. The psalm, *1 Cor. 14:26*, (as I apprehend it) was given in the same extraordinary way when the apostle said, "How is it then brethren? When ye come together every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation." These several talents and abilities were the effects of a more than ordinary power of the divine Spirit. But then these things did not last long. After they had answered the great ends of establishing the truth of the gospel, they vanished. There were no such things to be found with their successors in the next age. These mighty qualifications came at once, and went off after a short continuance. But let me ask, was all doctrine and instruction laid down and disused? No, surely, they continued teaching and preaching, though in an ordinary way, by reasoning out of the scripture. Again, was all praying laid aside? No, most certainly; they prayed according to their best abilities, though they had not those extraordinary gifts and aids, like their predecessors. Further, did they give over interpretation of scripture? No, there were men who learnt and studied divers languages and foreign tongues, the better to qualify themselves to interpret the word of God to others, in all ages, from that time to this. Why then must singing be pointed at, and singled out from among all these duties and performances, to be suppressed and buried in disuse? If it be to avoid using a set form of words, I desire it may be deliberately and impartially considered that most of the singing mentioned in the scriptures, and even in the New Testament, must be understood to be performed by set forms. The case of the Ephesians and Colossians can in no rational interpretation be taken otherwise, for the direction being indefinite, reaches posterity, as well as the living members of those churches; and is attended with the same reasons and circumstances which I have already hinted and explained. If the materials for singing were pointed out to them, the very same may, in all rational consequence, well suffice for us. The word of Christ is the same, and the psalms, hymns and spiritual songs contained therein are the same. Unto us was this word spoken, and the advice given, as well as unto them; therefore we are all under equal obligation to sing the same divine subject matter in the Book of Psalms as they sang.

I have before taken notice that it is highly probable, if not certain, that the hymn, *Mark 14:26*, which our Saviour and his disciples sang, was some part of David's psalms. And I think that most of the opposers of singing will allow this, though they apply it to the passover worship strictly, and not to the Lord's Supper, which I shall consider in its proper place. Again, as to the business, of Paul and Silas, *Acts 16:25*, it is the same word (as the root of it) that is used there, as in the forementioned singing of our Saviour and his disciples. It is to me very reasonable to suppose that it was an hymn out of the Jewish Book of Psalms, which they had treasured and retained in their memories that they sung at this time. I am satisfied, the contrary can never be shewn with any better evidence; for we do not read of Paul's conceiving or composing hymns or psalms for any special uses and occasions; and though it be said of him, *1 Cor. 14:15*, or rather that he said himself, he would sing with the Spirit, and sing with the understanding; yet he did not say that he would conceive any new, immediate psalm, as to the matter of it. And it is plain that singing with the Spirit and with the understanding is singing under the influence of the Holy Spirit, some spiritual songs, which we understand ourselves, and which may be understood by others. And if it cannot be proved that Paul composed any new psalm, or hymn, I am ready to think very few will imagine that Silas did. Therefore the probable conclusion is that they had something of the Psalms of David which occurred to their minds, and which, they judged, suited their case.

As to the instance of the apostle James, *James 5:13*, it is evident he binds the duty of singing upon ordinary Christians, without supposing them capable of composing a psalm; and since he wrote to the Jews, to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, they knew well enough how to take his advice, and where to find psalms and songs, which they and their forefathers had been long accustomed to. So that upon the whole, and even upon the strictest consideration and fairest examination, the Corinthian psalm, *1 Cor.*

*14:26*, appears to me to be the only one extraordinarily and immediately suggested or given to the singers. The rest, for anything I can see, or that can be solidly offered, may be allowed to go for set forms or, in plainer words, for the psalms of David, recorded long before in the Old Testament, and daily used by the Jewish churches in their public worship in their synagogues.

*Objection X.* But we do not understand the original inspired words of David, and of the other sacred penmen of the songs of the Old Testament, and particularly the Book of Psalms; and it is not lawful for us to make use of a translation.

I answer, that nothing can be more certain, in a rational way of deducing and concluding, than that the apostles Paul and James knew it beforehand, and were satisfied that the people must make use of a translation, and yet they press them to sing. Here is a duty urged, and they must find a way to perform it. They were to sing psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, and did not understand Hebrew. Then they must do it in some other language. They are exhorted to fetch their materials out of the word of Christ, and yet they did not understand the tongue in which it was inspired to the penmen. Therefore this word must be taken as translated, and they must make use of what they understood; for the apostle set them a pattern, and told them that he would sing with the spirit, and with the understanding also; *i.e.* sing with, and to the understanding of others. For this must be his plain and necessary meaning. And though I have observed somewhat already, about the usefulness of the Greek translation of the Old Testament, yet I will add here the following considerations as to the necessity of it.

1. The Jews themselves had need of it; especially those who had been scattered into distant provinces for a considerable space of time. There were multitudes of Jews of this sort, whose parents for the series of many generations had been born and bred up in other languages, especially in the Greek tongue. In Asia Minor there dwelt vast numbers of Jews, but their native and popular language was Greek, therefore they are called Grecians (Hellenists) in the New Testament, *Acts 6:1*. There arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews. *Acts 9:29*, Paul disputed against the Grecians. Now these people were Jews by descent and religion, but are called Grecians because they were born in Greekish countries, and because they used the Greek tongue and translation of the Bible. They had their synagogues in their respective towns and cities; they maintained their worship by reading the scriptures, and praying and singing psalms in Greek. They could do no otherwise. Thus Timothy, *2 Tim. 3:15*, is said from a child to know the Holy Scriptures. His knowledge came by and through this translation; for his father was a Greek, and lived somewhere at or near Derbe or Lystra, cities of Lycaonia in Asia Minor, *Acts 16:3*, *Acts 14:6*. Thus a translation is called the Holy Scriptures, and most deservedly so, if the translation be just. In this sense the word of the Lord endureth for ever, not as locked up in the Hebrew tongue, but as laid open in other languages, for the general use and benefit of mankind.

2. It is evident beyond contradiction, that the gentiles, with whom the apostle Paul had principally to deal, could not do without a translation. How should common and ordinary Christians among them understand Hebrew? But we find the same apostle directing the Gentile Ephesians and Colossians to sing psalms, &c. And it is not to be questioned they obeyed the word of exhortation, and consequently it must be that they performed their duty, in Greek psalms, hymns, or songs. And thus that heavenly Book of Psalms, the chief exemplar and standard of the praise of the God of Israel in the Jewish church, is handed down to celebrate the praises of the same God in other languages, by gentile worshippers in Christian assemblies.

*Objection XI.* The psalms, in order to sing them, are put into metre, or verse. And this must be human composition; it is not lawful for us to sing such.

I answer, By a parity of argument a prose translation is a human composition and when we read it, it is not reading the word of God, but the words of men. Now I desire it may be remembered that I have shewn already that the apostle calls a translation by the name of Holy Scriptures, which Timothy had known from a child. And upon the same ground we may call our English translation the word of God. And without it be so, the apostle Peter, *1 Pet. 1:23,25*, could not say that the word of God liveth and abideth for ever. For the Hebrew tongue is not a living language among any people, in any part of the world that we know of.

2. A good, grave, clear and pertinent version of the psalms in metre, by which we may safely and truly come at the meaning of the psalmist, may well be accounted a good translation and warrantably used as such. And it is of little weight (I think) to urge that metre requires adding more words, and omitting more words than prose does, and so causes a greater variation from the original. It may be replied that

in many places prose is chargeable with the same objection. As to the Old Testament, it could never be translated even into prose, without a great many additions or supplements; for the Hebrew tongue is brief and concise, and sometimes leaves words to be understood for the filling up of sentences; which if those vacancies were not supplied, the sense could never be made out. And a too close, and too strict verbal or literal translation would not be intelligible to us. The idioms, or proprieties of expressions in languages, differ so widely among themselves upon this account that there must always be a reasonable allowance given to translators, whether in prose or verse. But we find it possible, and practicable by experience, to keep abundance of the words, and to retain the whole of the sense of the psalmist, by a version in metre; and therefore it may be used with safety, and be not improperly or untruly called scripture-psalms; for a prose translation cannot do a great deal more; the meaning or subject matter being the main thing we aim at. Translations are nothing else but the dressing up of the self-same man in different sorts of clothes. Pure water will answer the same ends when conveyed through a clean pipe or conduit, as if it had been taken at the fountain head, and is the very self-same water.

3. It cannot be reasonably imagined that the apostle James should intend any other psalms than translated ones, for the scattered Jews to sing; for he exhorts them to this practice, as has been sufficiently observed. If their fore-fathers, when they came first out of Judea, understood the Hebrew psalms, yet their posterity in succeeding generations knew no more of it than the poor ordinary Jews among us at this day do; and they know little or nothing of the matter. Their Greek version stood them in good stead at this time, for here they found what they wanted, and what they well and familiarly understood. Here was a variety of choice of divine songs, according to their different frames or inclinations. As to what their measures and tunes, and particular usages and managements were, it is not so much my present business, at this distance, to enquire into. But, satisfied I am that they sung, and that it was performed by help of a translation; and that this was put into some measure and method fit for singing. And this is sufficient to my main purpose.

*Objection XII.* Singing of psalms was not designed as a part of public worship under the gospel.

I answer, Whether it was designed or not, it is plain it was a part of public worship in the apostle's time. The Corinthian psalm and singing, *1 Cor. 14:26*, cannot be taken in any other sense. In order to make this appear, I would offer these following considerations:

1. Let anyone read *1 Cor. 14* throughout, and he will find the word 'church' mentioned seven times, and 'churches' twice, which is nine times in all. Now, the whole business of the apostle in this chapter was to shew them how they should use their several gifts for the good and edification of the church. And he has pressed, explained and repeated this over and over.

2. Singing was one of the gifts and performances used in this church. It was not done in a corner, or in a private family, in a private manner; it was when and where the whole church was come together in one place, *v. 23*. The apostle was willing to rectify their tumultuary and disorderly praying, and singing, and preaching and prophesying, *vv. 26, 27*, "How is it then, brethren, when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation? Let all things be done to edifying. If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course, and let one interpret." It is undeniable that the psalm here is made a part of their public worship. It was an ingredient among other exercises. The apostle does not suppress any of these particular acts. He does not forbid the use of any of these gifts, much less does he single out the psalm, and singing to check that. Nay, he said that he would sing himself, *1 Cor. 14:15*, to countenance and encourage the practice, for his own, and the edification of others. The chief aim of the apostle was to reduce them to good order in their worship. He would have them stay till each had done his respective part, and so take their turns. He would not have them spend the whole time in mere praying nor in mere singing, preaching, or prophesying; but to allow some proper time for each of these exercises and duties. Again, he would not have two or more pray together, nor two or more sing together, nor preach, nor prophesy together, at one and the same period of time; for what they did was in strange tongues, and very likely they would hit upon different sorts of subjects. Nothing could be supposed to breed a greater confusion; therefore the apostle told them, if a stranger should at such a time peep in amongst them, he would think them all mad. And indeed well he might. But the apostle proposes a remedy for all this; *viz.* Let one pray in a strange tongue (if that was the present miraculous influence under which he was actuated) and let another interpret, who had the gift of interpretation, and then the whole church say Amen to his prayer. In like manner, let one sing a psalm, and another interpret, and the whole church say Amen. And so on, as to preaching and prophesying. Again, two or three at most might sing, one after another; and so preach and prophesy, one after another; but they

might not huddle things together, to confound one another, and the auditory too. And, to my best apprehension, this is a fair, open, and impartial representation of their case.

But I desire it may be observed, that the psalm challenges as rightful a claim, in this publick worship, as any of the other parts of the exercises; namely, praying, preaching, prophesying, or interpreting. Whosoever goes about to remove singing from this publick worship, must take away all the rest along with it. And the apostle himself said in this very chapter, v. 15, "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." There is no doubt to be made but that he intended that these duties should go together, or else he would not have coupled them after this familiar manner, upon an equal foot. His words are very express, and spoken indefinitely, without any discrimination or restriction, and most certainly ought to be understood as if he fairly and fully meant perpetuity of singing, as well as praying.

*Objection XIII.* The Corinthian singing was performed by one single person only, and therefore this will not prove the joint singing by many voices exerted together, as the fashion is in our day, which we think has neither precept nor precedent in the gospel.

I answer,

1. I readily acknowledge that this Corinthian singing was performed by one single person only; I never understood it otherwise. And I have often wondered that none of the opposers of singing by joint voices have ever struck into this way, rather than omit and reject the whole; since the gospel does mention, recommend, and press singing in so many places. It is better, I should think, to have it done in some way or manner, than to be totally disregarded and neglected.

2. But then it is evident, from the nature of things, that this extraordinary way of discharging all the parts of their worship in the church at Corinth, was not a rule for any other churches, nor was their singular method to be obligatory upon any other future societies. They had an uncommon effusion of the divine spirit, manifested in some amazing gifts among them, which we do not find granted to others; and their way of uttering or exercising these gifts, was as uncommon.

3. When these miraculous ways of performing and carrying on publick worship ceased, then all the parts of that worship must have been reduced to some ordinary rule and standard. No part was to be lost or hid aside, purely because there were no extraordinary abilities to discharge it with; for according to such procedure, the whole of publick worship might and must have been lost and laid down, as well as any one single part. And if people were left at liberty to set aside any part of publick worship upon this score, for want of extraordinary gifts, then they might choose what part to retain, and what to reject. And some might be so desperate as to cast out preaching; this would be a most absurd and dangerous liberty indeed; and yet it is the natural result of such a train of arguing. Therefore all the proper and integral parts of publick worship being equally and alike remaining unrevoked by any divine edict, or rather expressly urged to be continued, they must, I say, be reduced to some ordinary way of performance, or all be discontinued and neglected, upon the very same foot.

4. Let us a little consider and enquire what they did as to the other parts of publick worship, in the age next succeeding the apostles. Why, they prayed, as well as they could; they preached, as well as they could; and they interpreted prophecies, and dark passages and sayings of the scriptures, and gained skill in languages that might be subservient hereunto, as well as they could. In a word, they betook themselves to meditation and study, when they found that miraculous gifts failed, and so went on in their duty, as the Lord assisted them in the ordinary use of means.

5. Having dismissed the Corinthian miraculous way of performing all duties in their church, and shewn that many, and most of these duties, such as prayer, teaching and interpreting or expounding, were reduced to the ordinary way in which they have been held, and continued ever since, in the churches of Christ; let us now a little examine what became of singing, and see what farther light we can gain in regard to this. And we shall find that the same expedient, the same sort of remedy, was applied to singing, as to the rest of their duties. It was brought to the ordinary standard; it was modelled by an ordinary rule. It is not only mentioned, but commanded, and there are rules and directions given concerning it. The apostle's manner of expressing himself amounts to no less. And it may not be amiss to observe here, that it is allowed that the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians were written later than the first to the Corinthians; and therefore the hints about singing are somewhat fresher, fuller, and more particular; and the advices and exhortations given are so adapted, that they will, and do suit us as well as they did them. There was nothing required of them but what plain, common Christians, could easily perform; and what we can also discharge, with the like facility, pleasure, and readiness; we having all the furnitures, materials and requisites, which they had. This is the advantage of bringing this

practice to the ordinary pitch, that the churches in succeeding generations might be able to keep up the duty, according to the apostle's rule, fully as well as the Ephesians and Colossians did. What were they directed to? To take a psalm, or an hymn, or a spiritual song, out of the Book of Psalms, the word of God and Christ, and to sing it among themselves for their mutual edification. This is no more than what has been done in all ages ever since, and what is done in our day, and may be done in all succeeding times to the end of the world, by common and ordinary Christians. It is therefore in my apprehension, our incumbent and evident duty, to keep up to the apostle's rule, since it is every way in our power to obey it. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

And now having placed the business of singing in this light, in the common rank of duties, as being upon the same foot with the other parts of divine worship; and seeing that it is to be performed in an ordinary way, and that the method directed to by the apostle, is as practicable by us as by the primitive Christians; I desire that these following considerations may be duly weighed, as to singing with joint voices.

(1.) That this was the ordinary method used by the Jews, in their stated worship, is beyond any dispute. Nor was there any complaint, nor any visible ground or reason for a complaint, as to any difficulty or disorder, that could attend such a practice. All was performed with inward serenity and pleasure, as well as with exact outward uniformity and regularity. They joined not only many voices to make up the vocal part, but also both voices and sounds of musical instruments in consort, to celebrate their worship. *2 Chron. 5:13*, "As the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lift up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals, and instruments of musick," &c. So that the charge of confusion upon joint-singing is apparently groundless, and indeed frivolous; since we find, by experience, that the union or junction of voices doth rather mend and enhance the melody, than any way impede or destroy it.

(2.) Though the gospel makes no mention of musical instruments, and upon that account I do not in the least recommend or defend the use of them; yet it is undeniable that the New Testament expressly enjoins singing. And I cannot discern the reason why we may not understand this singing in the ordinary way among the Jews, which we find to have been always practised by joint voices. I think the opposers of it should propose another, and a better way; a way peculiar to the gospel, and more convenient for the discharge of this duty, before they utterly reject the thing itself, and entirely shut this part of worship out of the churches. It is to no purpose at all to allege that singing in the Jewish church was typical of gospel mirth, or spiritual joy. For it may be replied, with the utmost truth and reason, that singing never was a type of anything, for it is a natural action. It may be improved indeed by some rules of art, and so may speaking, but they are both natural actions for all that. Crying out in a doleful sound, in extremity of pain, and distress and danger, is merely natural. So is singing; it is a modulation of the voice, to express the inward cheerfulness of the mind, and is purely a natural action. Indeed it may be performed under the influence of the Spirit of God and Christ; and it may be performed under the influence of wine or even of Satan; as their Bacchanalian songs among the heathen were used to celebrate the praises of their idol gods and goddesses. But this was not the fault of the natural faculty of singing; it was the fault of those who abused it. The faculty may be better employed in singing psalms and divine matter, in a spiritual frame, to the honour of the God of Heaven.

(3.) Singing with joint voices is very consistent with the direction of the apostle to the Ephesians and Colossians; for we find the Ephesians were to speak to themselves, or to one another (*Eautois*), in psalms and songs, singing &c. The Colossians were to teach and admonish one another (*Eautous*). It is the same word that is used in both places. The same word is also used in *Eph. 4:32*, (*Eautois*), "Forgiving one another." If the word be fairly examined, it denotes mutuality; or it necessarily implies doing a thing mutually, from one side to the other. Now I can conceive but of two ways by which they might speak to themselves and teach and admonish one another mutually in psalms, hymns and songs, singing &c. First, by one person standing up in the congregation and singing a psalm to the rest, having first read the matter of his psalm or song that the others might be able to say *Amen* to it when he had done; and so a second and a third going on in course, doing the like; this might reach the case in hand; yet shew I unto you a more excellent way, *viz.* Secondly, By the whole assembly singing together with joint voices, having a precentor, or a leading singer, who shall set the tune and the pitch or key of it; he having also distinctly and deliberately read the words of the psalm or song, that all may understand what they sing; and that the subject-matter and the words may be the same, and that their hearts and voices may be as one, in the performance; thus they may, in the apostle's sense, speak to themselves and to one another, and so teach and admonish and stir up one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in their hearts to the Lord. We have already observed and

proved that this was the stated Jewish method, and the psalms are visibly adapted to such a practice, and do plainly invite hereunto. Instead of multitudes of instances, I shall only refer to one or two, *viz.*

*Psa. 95:1,2.* "O come, let us sing unto the Lord. Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms."

*Psa. 146:2.* "I will sing praises unto my God, while I have any being."

*Psa. 147:1.* "Praise ye the Lord, for it is good to sing praises unto our God."

It is easy to observe here, and elsewhere, that the nature of the book of Psalms has a direct tendency to answer the apostle's injunction. It is suited to teach and admonish, to quicken and enflame each other's devout affections, and to forward and animate the sallies of our minds towards God and Christ. And this may as well be done now, in every respect, as it was formerly, by joining and uniting our voices in singing of psalms, and hymns, &c. And this would fully and plainly comport with the apostle's meaning.

(4.) There is no manner of room left to doubt, but that our Saviour and his disciples sung together with joint voices, at the close of the celebration of the Supper. It is affirmed by the two evangelists Matthew and Mark, *Matt. 26:30, Mark 14:26*, in express terms; the phrase is in the plural number; so that, without any the least straining or stretching the sense, it is evident they were all concerned in the act; for it is said, "when they had sung an hymn," &c. Herein they followed the manner of the Jews, which was to sing some part of the psalms of David at the conclusion of the eating of the Passover. The story is left open to our view and observation, and, as I am well satisfied, for our imitation.

It is of no importance, in my apprehension, to allege that this hymn did relate to the Passover and not to the Lord's Supper. I think it rather shews that it regarded both; as it concluded the one, so it was to be continued with the other; it shews that our Lord did not design to make any material alteration in vocal social singing in his worship; but that it should be continued under the gospel, and particularly at the celebration of his own Supper. Here we find it placed; and here we ought to keep it. He borrowed the materials of the Supper, *i.e.* the bread and wine, from the feast of the Passover; and if he borrowed the hymn too, I cannot see any reason we have to omit it. It rather confirms what I aim at, that we ought to retain the hymn as well as the use of the bread and wine, and the practice of blessing both these, by distinct prayers, after the glorious pattern that is left us on record.

It is of less importance still, in my opinion, to say that this hymn is not mentioned by Luke and John, nor by Paul, in *1 Cor. 11*, where he rehearses the institution of the Lord's Supper. For it may be well replied that the blessing, or thanksgiving, is not mentioned at all by John; but it does not follow from thence that there was no such thing, or that it was not enjoined on us to observe it. Besides, there is nothing more common in the Holy Scriptures than for one penman to omit a particular circumstance, when the Holy Ghost takes special care that it shall be found written in another place, either by the same or by another hand.

*Objection XIV.* The Ephesians were required to be filled with the Spirit in order to sing; how can this be done or expected in our day?

I answer, The same qualification was required in deacons, *Acts 6*, they were to be men full of the Holy Ghost, and of wisdom; and where shall we find such now? But must we lay aside and lose the office and order of deaconship upon this account? No surely! Nor are we to lay aside singing, because we live in ordinary times; for we must perform it in the best way we can, and with that measure of the Spirit which the Lord shall be pleased to give us.

*Objection XV.* Singing with joint voices introduceth women's speaking in the church; which is expressly forbidden by the apostle.

I answer, That, *1 Cor. 14:34,35*, women are forbidden to speak by way of teaching or preaching, is very certain; so they are also prohibited asking questions publicly in the church. And there are plain reasons given why this liberty is not allowed to that sex, *viz.* because these things would not be consistent with their natural reservedness and becoming modesty, and would tend to invert the order of nature, which has placed them in some prudent subjecton to their husbands.

But then, on the other hand, women are permitted to give an account of their faith and experience, when required thereunto. They may also answer with discretion and modesty to any necessary questions that may be put to them in order to bear witness to any truth or fact. In such cases they may speak. It seems to me evident that Lydia spoke, and made some confession in the church before she was baptized, and afterwards, *Acts 16*. And it is plain that Sapphira was questioned in the church and did answer accordingly there, in the case of the lie about selling the land, *Acts 5*.

2. Teaching, by way of preaching, was not required nor expected from all private men who were members of the church, because all men were not capable of it. But then all the brethren, even the meanest of them, are exhorted and required to teach and admonish one another, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. This sort of teaching is a branch of divine adoration, offered jointly by mutual consent to the honour of the divine Majesty, wherein every individual member is equally bound to bear his share. Upon this footing women ought to come in, and to join with us; for they are as much concerned to admire and praise God, for the works of creation and providence, and for redemption through Christ Jesus, as we men are. Besides, they are as capable, and perhaps are better qualified in some respects, by the tender emotions of their affections, and by their easy pronounciation and modulation of their words and voices, than we men are. Therefore I can see no manner of reason to debar women from bearing their part in celebrating the praises of God by singing psalms, under any pretence of its not being lawful for their sex to speak in the church; for it is not this sort of speaking that the apostle intended to forbid. And thus I dismiss the objection as weak and inconclusive, and as not affecting the business of womens singing in our assemblies, so as to discountenance it in the least.

*Objection XVI.* This way of singing admits of profane and carnal persons joining with us and so they defile the ordinance to us, and bring us to be partakers of their sins; for they are guilty of lying when in singing they profess to hate every evil way, and that their heart panteth after God, and that they have none in heaven nor on earth whom they desire besides him, &c. Therefore it is better not to sing at all, than to join with such.

I answer,

1. That this objection is every whit as strong against publick prayer, as it is against promiscuous singing. Does not the minister, in the name of the whole congregation, call God our Father, and profess humiliation and sorrow for sin, and a resolution to forsake every evil way, and a desire to live unto him in all holy obedience, and to have and maintain communion with him in prayer, and all his other ordinances? I say, does not the minister comprehend the congregation with himself, when at the same time, there may be divers persons present who have not the least thoughts of these things? It is impossible for the minister to single out, and to know what persons will join with him, and what will not, in these solemn acts of confession. But still I hope it will be allowed that he is in the way of his duty, though there could be but two or three that join with him in sincerity and in truth; for he cannot help the hypocrisy and wickedness of the hearts of others. This case seems to me to be parallel to that of promiscuous singing; I cannot discern any material difference between them. So that the result of the matter is this: If we may not sing psalms in such mixed assemblies, then we may not make resolutions, confessions, and promises, and protestations, and thanksgivings, in the behalf of others, in publick prayer, in promiscuous congregations.

2. It is evident that the Lord has determined to suffer things to be thus, *viz.* that saints and hypocrites should in a mixed manner join, and appear in outward acts of worship before him. We read that the net of the gospel gathers into it both good and bad, *Matt. 13:47,48*; and that the children of the kingdom, *Matt. 13:30*, the good seed, are mingled with the children of the wicked one; the tares, in the same field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is resembled to a king that made a marriage for his son, *Matt. 22:2*, and sent forth his servants, who gathered together both good and bad, in order to furnish the marriage with guests. And again it is compared to ten virgins, *Matt. 25:1*, five whereof were wise, and five were foolish. This is the mingled condition, or mixed state of the church of God here upon earth. And it is so ordered that the wheat and the tares shall be suffered to grow together till harvest; then the separation shall be made. From hence it undeniably appears that if we will pray, or sing psalms in the publick worship of God, we must do these things in such promiscuous assemblies, as that there will be some good, and some bad persons frequently amongst us; and yet this ought not to deter us from our duty; for every man's works shall be tried, and every man shall bear his own burden.

*Objection XVII.* Some of the psalms are almost altogether Jewish and were penned for other persons for other times, circumstances, and occasions and which are neither suitable to us, nor our hearts and affections, and conditions, suitable to them. As for instance,

Some refer to legal sacrifices and services, which are abolished. Some set forth that beauty and glory of Jerusalem and Mount Zion in that city. Some are histories of things done to and for the Jewish nation, under the Old Testament.

Others are predictions and representations of things to come. Others are penitential psalms, for particular crimes, that we have not been guilty of, as *Psalms 51*, we run the risk of telling or uttering lies.

Others contain direful imprecations and curses. And how shall we sing such psalms when we are commanded to bless and curse not?

In answer, There being divers sorts of objections put together in this place, I desire the following particulars may be considered, for satisfaction in these points:

1. How Jewish soever some of the psalms may be, yet they treated of the state of the church of God, though veiled and shadowed with the rites and ceremonies of the times. And it may, most certainly, give us very great and sensible pleasure to contemplate and meditate (in singing) on those shadows being done away, and the day-spring from on high having visited us by the clear light of the gospel. Besides, it may give a spiritual and a gospel turn, in our thoughts, to most of those Jewish customs. Particularly,

2. As for those psalms which mention sacrifices and services which are abolished, they most sweetly lead us to Jesus Christ the great sacrifice and anti-type of all others, "who offered up himself once for all, and put an utter end to offerings and burnt-offerings, which could never make the comers thereunto perfect." The very term "sacrifice" is so far from being distasteful and disagreeable to gospel worshippers, that it should be very amiable and recommending to them, since our blessed Lord took the very appellation upon himself and became a sacrifice and is styled, "our passover sacrificed for us," *1 Cor. 5:7*.

3. As for those psalms which set forth the beauty and glory of Jewish national assemblies, in Jerusalem; and on Mount Zion, it is well known they always carried in them a gospel-sense, a mystical and spiritual signification, and such as is very applicable to us now, for Jerusalem and Zion, and their solemn assemblies, were always types of the churches and congregations under the New Testament. And do we not daily pray for the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem and of Zion and of the whole Israel of God, making use of the lofty phrases of the Old Testament, to embellish and adorn our language in prayer and praise under the New? Again, shall we not sing those inspired songs which were composed on purpose to celebrate the honour of our great king, whom God has set upon his holy hill of Zion? Can we forbear expressing our wishes, in the most rapturous strains, that God would once more make Jerusalem the joy of the whole earth? These things, I should think, as they are the most sublime and noble, so they are some of the most moving and befitting subjects of songs of praise under the gospel.

4. As for those psalms which contain histories of things done to and for the Jewish nation, under the Old Testament, they really concern us, for we are in duty bound to bless and admire that love, grace, and stretched-out arm of power, by which the Jewish church was delivered from Egypt and Babylon, &c. The very end of recording these things was that we, and others in succeeding generations, might declare Jehovah's wondrous works, and talk of his mighty deeds, by setting forth his praises in the midst of the congregations. "For his mercy endureth for ever."

5. As for those psalms which contain predictions of things to come, we sing the accomplishment of a great many of them; and joyfully admire and extol that God, who shews himself always faithful and uniform in his prophesies and providences, in making good his word unto his servants, "upon which he had caused them to hope."

6. As for the penitential psalms, particularly the 51st, we may be thankful to God that we have not been suffered to fall into those dreadful sins and snares; since the seed, root and principles of the same evil may be discerned in us, and in all the rest of mankind. And if we have not been guilty of the same sort of crimes, yet we may justly reproach ourselves with somewhat very sinful, and bearing a near resemblance to these things, and equally hateful in the sight of God. Let us seriously reflect on the excursions of sensual and lustful thoughts that have escaped us, and passed through our minds; and on some personal resentments that we have entertained and some invidious meditations we have formed, to compass some bad and sinful ends. Now, though God has graciously prevented putting such things in actual execution, yet they may sufficiently serve to convince us that we might have been guilty of such foul and heinous facts, if left to ourselves. These considerations may qualify us, in a

great measure, to assume and to apply the most penitential phrases of this, or any other psalm, to our own state and condition. I say, we shall be able to do this if we have a due sense of the vileness, treachery, and baseness of our own hearts and natures; and without some degree of frame and disposition this way, we shall neither be fit to pray, nor sing as we should do.

Bue to put this business out of doubt, as to the lawfulness of singing the 51st psalm, and others like it; let it be considered, it was sung by the chief musician, and the Levites, and the Jewish church. This is plain from the title and inscription of it., And can we suppose them to be guilty of David's crimes, in a literal and strict sense? No, surely! But they were not scrupulous about using the words of confession. It is therefore, to me, a clear indication that the psalm was penned by the direction and inspiration of the Holy Ghost, as a standing pattern of contrition for, and confession of sin, to the church of God in all ages; and consequently may be used by us, and others in our day, with all godly freedom.

7. As for any psalms which have some peculiar things, and seemingly odd expressions in them, they are easily accommodated to our conditions at this day. As for instances: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down," *Psa. 137*. We may here review the former calamities, and revolve in our minds some signal afflictions of the church of God; and we may see how they behaved, and what the Lord did for them. We may also meditate upon the providences of God towards his church and people in our times, when our Zion was in distress, and the city Shushan perplexed, *Esth. 3:15*. As in the reign of King Charles; and in the close of that of Queen Anne, the ever memorable first of August, when we expected our doom, when our harps were going to be hung upon the willows, and we preparing to sit down and weep by them. Again: "Mine heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty;" &c., *Psa. 131*. It is to be hoped that most religious people study to avoid ambitious and sinfully aspiring thoughts. We do not want to be above our stations. We are concerned with the allotments of providence, and desire to bless God that it is so well; and no worse with us.

8. As for those psalms, *e.g. Psa. 35:4-6*, which have some denunciations of divine wrath, destruction and curses upon the enemies of God and his church; we are to consider that these expressions, and the wrath and destruction couched under them, against any specified objects, were dictated and directed by the infallible Spirit of God and Christ; and the objects levelled at and intended, are and were foreseen to be implacable, irreclaimable, irreconcilable enemies of Christ and his church. They are such as would not have the Son of God to reign over them. Nevertheless, that glorious king shall order those rebellious subjects to be brought and slain before him. He shall rule them with a rod of iron, *Psa. 2:9*, and "dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. The Jewish church sung these things; and shall not the saints of the New Testament, who will be honoured to judge the world with Christ? I say, shall they not join in applauding and celebrating the sentence and doom, which he justly pronounces upon his and their most inveterate enemies? Besides, do we not daily pray that God would destroy that man of Sin, the Son of Perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, *2 Thess. 2:3,8*? Whom the Lord "shall consume with the Spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming. Again, when the mystery of Antichrist, *Rev. 18*, the great city Babylon, the Mother of Harlots, is cast as a great millstone into the midst of the sea, are we not loudly called upon to share in the joy?

I am far from entertaining or promoting an uncharitable spirit, or a malignant temper, or malevolent wishes; but there is a false charity, as well as a true one; a sinful clemency, as well as a righteous one. Saul would have spared Agag, *1 Sam. 15:33*, whom Samuel hewed to pieces before the Lord. Again, the prophet pronounced a heavy doom upon Ahab, for sparing Benhadad, a man whom God had appointed to utter destruction, *1 Kin. 20:42*. There will be no thanks to us, for our officious and formal charity, where God denounceth wrath. Therefore, when we keep to the words and meaning of the Holy Scriptures, without maliciously applying of them, out of our own heads; against particular persons and parties, we are safe in using the sacred and inspired passages, whether in prayer or praise. I add, that to decline using of them, out of a pretended charitable fear, is rather our sin than duty; for it is to think ourselves wiser than the God of wisdom, and to make ourselves more merciful than the Father of mercy, and fountain of all grace .

*Objection XVIII.* The modern tunes to which the psalms are often set, are too light and airy, and not fit to be used in the solemn service of God.

I answer, There are other tunes which are more grave, that people may choose in these things, as their own judgments lead them. Some tune is necessary if we sing at all, to prevent confusion. And the apostle's rule, as to singing, as well as other duties, is, *1 Cor. 14:40*, "Let all things be done decently, and in order. It is plain, from the titles of several of the psalms, that they were to be set to such an instrument, or such a tune, or both. The performance was to be tuneful, for the sake of many that were

to join in it. For when it is perceived what tune the psalm is set to, the whole congregation may sing with as much order and ease as if but one single person sung. And pray what is a tune? It is only a musical modulation of the sound, in a graver or brisker motion. We act somewhat very like it, in common speech. Do not we raise and lower the voice, that we may lay a particular stress and emphasis upon what words we please? Do not we choose to speak, even in preaching, some words louder and shriller than we do others? This must be with an honest design to awaken the attention, and to excite our own, as well as the affections of others. Again, do not all ministers endeavour to speak in a way pleasing to their hearers, by ordering some sort of a cadence in their words and sentences, so as to move and persuade others, in the best manner they can? The use and design of a tune, in singing of psalms, is no other than this: it is for the uniting of our voices, helping and raising of our affections, and securing a just uniformity, and regularity in this part of the solemn worship of God.

*Objection XIX.* The prophet Amos, *Amos 6:5*, seems to reflect upon the practice of David, for inventing and multiplying instruments of musick, as he did.

I answer, That the reflection or reproof in that place, did not in the least affect the conduct of David in his time, nor his musick in any after times; for the reproof was directed against them in Amos's time, *Amos 6:3-6*, who "put far away the evil day, and caused the seat of violence to draw near; who lay; upon beds of ivory, and did eat lambs of the flock, and the calves out of the stall, and drank wine in bowls, and chanted to the sound of the viol." And all this in their gluttonous and drunken feasts, without any fear of God, or being any way grieved for the affliction of Joseph; *i. e.* the calamitous state of the church of God. Therefore if this debauched people made a bad use of the good creatures given them, and of musick and musical instruments among the rest, that is no argument at all. that holy David was guilty also. No such thing is suggested here, nor indeed anywhere else; for David's skill in musick, and his musical instruments, were employed in celebrating the worship of God, with apparent and undoubted approbation, and acceptance with the Lord, in those times. He is numbered among the greatest of the prophets and saints of the Old Testament, and was infallibly guided by the Holy Spirit, in all that he penned, said or did, or directed in the service of the sanctuary. And when his whole character came to be summed up at his death, it was in the highest and noblest strains of divine encomiums, *2 Sam. 23:1*: "David the Son of Jesse, the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel." A sure argument that his psalms and psalmody were well-pleasing to God!

Thus having briefly and seriously examined the arguments for and against singing psalms, in the worship of God under the gospel, I conclude with a humble recommendation of the practice to all who are desirous to promote the honour of God and Christ, the prosperity and order of the churches, and the growth of grace, peace and comfort in their own souls. Amen.

---