

PRESBYTERIAN STANDARD

LIFT UP A STANDARD FOR THE PEOPLE

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AN APRIL PICTURE, AND A THOUGHT.

Beyond the naked boughs where naught appears
 Save swelling buds, the distant meadow wears
 Faint promises of beauteous things to be
 When she from winter's icy bonds is free.
 Down on the merry streamlet's marge the fern
 Unfolds its tawny fronds, while maples burn
 Like crimson tapers 'gainst the solemn pines.
 The fields are full of April's flower signs,
 The nearer woods are full of cheerful song
 And life, and growth are everywhere!

A throng

Of cherished hopes and unfulfilled desires
 Like ferns unfold for us. The soul inquires:
 Why should not fuller life be mine to-day,
 Is it not this for which we're taught to pray?
 The woods reply: Who writes on field and hill
 Such object-lessons, will your yearnings still,
 Will give you life abundantly, and show
 Desires that reach for sunlight how to grow!

—O. H.

It is the substance of worship that is appointed, not its circumstance.

We express the sentiments of many of our readers in thanking our correspondent, "The Author of Howard McPhlin," for the serial story "Virtue Its Own Reward."

The Presbytery of Liberia has 12 churches with 400 members 546 Sunday scholars and three students for the ministry, with 10 ordained "native helpers." We presume that the native helpers are distinguished from the Afro-American aristocracy who belong, as it were, to the order of the Sons of Revolution.

Andrew Murray's Huguenot Seminary at Cape Colony has sent out 500 teachers and 21 native missionaries in the 22 years of its existence.

Once more it is said that Dr. McGiffert would have withdrawn if Dr. Birch had not appealed. Promise of withdrawal has been made before and broken. The time of an appeal is limited by law. Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird. Failure to appeal would have ended the McGiffert case.

The work of all the Protestant Missions in darkest Africa makes an impression when given as a total. There are 1,900 churches, 120,000 communicants, and 1,000,000 adherents. There are 1,100 schools and 60,000 pupils. Africa will be the wonderful continent of the twentieth century, and if the native inhabitants only knew how necessary the civilizing influences of the Gospel were to their very existence in the struggle that is coming, how gladly they would welcome the missionaries and claim the protection of the Christian Churches, which still in all important matters control the conscience of the civilized world.

The Catholic clergy of Brazil are now engaged in a systematic crusade against Protestant influence. They are demanding the union of Church and State, suppression of religious liberty, and the abolition of civil marriages and secular cemeteries. That is, they want the right to withhold marriage and the privilege of burial from any they please. It sounds strange that in the last year of the nineteenth century a so-called Christian Church should put on record, in a pastoral letter, its desire for the exercise of such medieval tyranny. We suggest that the Church in Brazil grant the right of some sort of marriage to its adulterous priests as the first step in reform.

Instead of answering Mr. Harris, Dr. Chalmers has written a book of fifty pages, which may be had of the author. We try to show the other side of the case in this issue, and we put our effort into pamphlet form also, with the letter of Mr. Harris. It can be had of the Presbyterian Publishing Company, Charlotte. Meantime we feel like apologizing to our readers in general for devoting so much space to a matter of local interest, mainly, and promise them that this is the last of it. Mr. Harris is still unanswered and we shall consider him unanswerable. We have accumulated a lot of valuable matter for publication and ask our correspondents' patience.

Dr. Chalmers' Failure. The Associate Reformed Church has a total membership of 10,964 with 302 communicants in its Mexican Mission. It has fewer members than in 1897 and fewer by 184 than in 1898. Its largest constituency is in the Presbyterian section covered by the Presbyteries of Mecklenburg and Bethel. Dr. Chalmers' figure of the "dyke" keeping out the waves of ocean is too impressive. We have rather an island in mid ocean gradually subsiding beneath the waters.

Just to keep the record straight, when the Southern Presbyterian Church made its recent overtures to the A. R. P. Church for a union of the two bodies, the Moderator of the A. R. P. Synod replied, in courteous terms, but declining, on the ground that the A. R. P. Church believed in "preaching the Word, praying the Word and singing the Word." We pointed out then the inconsistency of confining the service of song to the words of the Bible while allowing full latitude in prayer and preaching, though calling them, praying the Word and preaching the Word. Mr. Robert H. Harris, an honored citizen of Mecklenburg county, wrote a letter to the STANDARD of February 21st, giving in clear and concise form a statement of his reasons for severing his lifelong connection with the A. R. P. Church. Mr. Harris made the same point as to preaching the Word, praying the Word and singing the Word, which seems to be a sort of Shibboleth. We commented on the unassailable logic of this central position and opened the columns of the STANDARD to any of the A. R. P. brethren who wished to show the fallacy of this reasoning. Our question was, Why should the singing of the Word be so different from preaching it or praying it?

We commend Dr. Chalmers' wisdom in ignoring Mr. Harris's article, but we wish to point out that it was that and not our brief comment that elicited the reply which is concluded in this issue of the STANDARD.

It is necessary to-day for a church to show a good reason for a separate existence. The expense of keeping up a small organization, the friction and the waste of money that comes from the attempt to sustain two kindred churches where there is only room for one and the impossibility of joining fittingly in the great work of evangelizing the heathen nations are all reasons for this. Men can understand why the Methodist and Presbyterian hosts should be separate. They can understand the convenience of having national churches. They can respect the sentiment that keeps for a while the Southern Churches, representatives of what was once a nation, apart from the Northern. But unless a clear principle can be shown for a distinctive existence the church must decline in influence and in numbers. Dr. Chalmers doubtless recognizes this. We claim that he has failed to show either the reasonableness or the scripturalness of the only remaining distinctive principle of his church. We believe that that failure involves the inability of any man in his church to succeed in the attempt, and we hope that neither pride nor prejudice will blind our brethren, whom we love and honor, to the fact that such failure involves the sin of schism.

Dr. Chalmers fails ignominiously in the logic of his argument. We are at a loss to know whether this was a slip on his part or whether his investigation convinced him that he could not support the real minor premise. He occupies eight columns of the STANDARD in proving his major premise, "What is not commanded is forbidden." His minor premise ought to have been: The singing of hymns is not commanded. Then his conclusion would have been. Therefore the singing of hymns is forbidden. This conclusion has been made necessary by the change in the constitution of the A. R. P. Church to which Mr. Harris alludes, and against which he protested, the change from a law prescribing the use of the Psalmody in the public worship of God in the A. R. P. churches to a law forbidding the members of the A. R. P. Church to sing anything but the Psalms in the worship of God. Dr. Chalmers is not defending the right of his church to commend the Psalms but the right of the Church to forbid its private members to sing anything else in the worship of God. So he lays down with great pains the major premise: What is not commanded is forbidden, and follows it with the minor premise: The use of the Psalms is commanded. We can admit both premises and deny the conclusion he wishes to draw or any other conclusion. His minor premise might just as well have been: The preaching of the Gospel is commanded, and the equally logical

conclusion would follow: Therefore the singing of hymns is forbidden.

To show that we are not doing Dr. Chalmers an injustice we quote from his second article. After speaking of the importance of the major premise he says, "The proposition we propose to establish now is this and this only, that the Psalms have been appointed, instituted, prescribed and commanded by God, to constitute the matter of praise in the worship of his church, both public and private to the end of the world." And then as if to emphasize his failure he calls for help and says, "If any others are offered or employed, whether inspired or uninspired, it rests upon those who offer or employ them to show the same or equal authority for their use, else they are excluded." And while he inserts "psalms and they only" in his re-statement of the minor premise, he still calls upon us to "show the command to use (hymns) in the service of God."

He undertakes to convict the Christian world, with the exception of a few thousand people, of the sin of will-worship and in the process requires them to prove themselves innocent. He holds up the dreadful sin of Nadab and Abihu with their "strange fire," of Uzzah with his impious hand, of Saul with his direct disobedience of God's command and depicts their fate as a warning to all Christians who sing,

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord
Is laid for your faith in his excellent word,

and bids them show him that they are not equally guilty with these ancient sinners. There is a dreadful hint conveyed in the fate of Moses, who died unable to reach the promised land, but the case of Moses is more to the point than the others. For there is recorded against him this accusation: "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord." Perhaps this is one reason why none of that generation could enter the promised land, and perhaps Caleb and Joshua escaped that fate because they were unable to turn a tune.

While it is difficult to do Dr. Chalmers an injustice in exposing the weakness of his position we want to convince the reader that we are not treating him unfairly and so we quote his own words again: "The eighteenth Psalm is found in the Second Book of Samuel. . . Other psalms such as the song of Moses at the Red Sea are not transferred to the Book of Psalms and the question naturally arises, Why is this distinction made? The answer is . . . that those Psalms have a place in this book which in the estimation of Infinite Wisdom were best adapted to the edification of the Church in all ages." That is, the Song of Moses ought not to be sung by us because it is excluded from the Divine hymn-book. Then it ought not to have been sung by Moses and Miriam because it was not fit to go in the hymn-book aforesaid. Deborah ought to have kept her mouth shut after her victory and Hannah after her prayer had been answered, because these Psalms too failed to pass the test. Mary's Magnificat and Simeon's Nunc Dimittis were both defective in that they were spontaneous bursts of praise not included in the Psalmody. We are afraid that if Dr. Chalmers had been with the Shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem he would have rebuked the angelic chorus because "Glory to God in the Highest, On Earth Peace," is not to be found in the Psalter, and that he would have joined with the Pharisees in asking the Master to reprove the children who cried in the Temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David, Hosanna in the Highest," because the expression is not a paraphrase of a verse of the Psalms.

We may be one of those who "rush in where angels fear to tread." But we claim the right to sing a spiritual song not in the Psalter because the angels evidently did not fear to do that very thing.

As for his minor premise we can dismiss his whole contention covering several pages, about our duty to sing psalms, with two words, "We do."

But John Randolph used to say that when a man's conclusion was absurd it made no difference by what steps he arrived at the absurdity. The very idea that all the hymnology of the Church of Christ is a mischievous science, that all the noble hymns of the Latin and Greek and English and German are worse than useless and that the singing of them is wrong, is a proposition that wears its indictment on its face. It is difficult to argue with an opponent who has a picture in his mind of the Psalms as a hymn-book, printed and bound for the Colossian Christians, for instance, and intended for the same use to which Rouse's Version is put and for

that only. But here is where Dr. Chalmers fails again. He is not familiar with the literature of hymnology in general and of the Psalms in particular.

Allow us to remark that we yield to no man in our admiration for the Psalms. The rhetoric which Dr. Chalmers uses, both original and quoted, to express his sense of their beauty and spiritual power has been surpassed many times by devout and reverent students who love the Christian hymns also.

The A. R. P. Church is not the only witness in the South for the supreme place of the Psalms in lyrical literature. It perhaps, by emphasizing one use of the Psalms, has failed to recognize even more important service that they render to the people of God.

"Psalms" was one of the grand divisions of the Old Testament, sometimes called the Hagiographa. Christ recognized this division in telling the disciples of Emmaus of the "things which were written in the law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms concerning me." "Psalms" in this use of the word contained Proverbs, Job, the Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes. So that Dr. Chalmers' etymology proves too much. "The word psalm is of Greek derivation and comes from a word which signifies to sing. Psalms, then, are songs which are to be sung."

Therefore, Job and Proverbs and Ecclesiastes ought to be included in the Divine Hymn-book for they are all commonly called "Psalms." And the Song of Solomon is certainly a spiritual song even in Dr. Chalmers' narrow definition, "an inspired song." For the sake of future text-books on logic we think that this example of reasoning in a circle ought to be placed on record. 'Psallo' means to sing. Therefore a psalm is to be sung. But 'psallo' has the same root as psalm. Therefore when James says "Is any merry let him 'psallo,'" it means let him sing psalms. Dr. Chalmers actually cites this text in proof of the proposition that "the New Testament commands us to sing Psalms," while contending that a psalm must be sung because the word is derived from 'psallo.'

The "Book of Psalms," as used in the New Testament, or simply "The Psalms" refers to the Psalter. This phrase is used three times in quotations in public speaking. But "David," the author of many of the Psalms, is used eleven times, in such expressions as "David saith," for the same purpose. The principal use made of the Psalms in the New Testament was in preaching, not singing. And probably the most frequent use of the Psalms to-day in Christian lands is the reading of them in public exposition and private devotions. It is true that the Psalms were sung both in the Temple and in the Synagogue. But they were sung in the original, poetic form in which they were written. That is the only Inspired Psalmody, the Hebrew Psalter. The difficulty of preserving a faithful translation and a poetic form at the same time has been insuperable. Hebrew rhyme is a parallelism of sense. English is a parallelism of measure and sound. And generally when the paraphrase is near enough to the original to call it inspired it is not poetry and when it is made into poetry it is too far from the original to call it inspired without straining the truth. Poetry is just as essential to an "ode" as music is to a song. Rouse was a good man but nobody would call him a poet, and he had more trouble making David speak English than Luther had in making Job speak German. Certainly one can hardly be blamed for preferring to read the musical and poetic rendering of the Authorized Version to singing:

Thou shalt as with a weighty rod,
Of iron break them all;
And them as potters vessel, thou
Shalt dash in pieces small.

In spite of the nameless "competent judges" which Dr. Chalmers quotes to the effect that the paraphrase is nearer right than the Authorized Version, we shrewdly suspect that "weighty" was added to the first line for the sake of the metre and that "small" was added to the last for the sake of the rhyme.

But if the Psalms were a hymn-book, they were and are and will always be the prayer-book of the world. Dr. Chalmers contends that they are a Book of Praise, and that the duty of praise "is to be performed by the singing of Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs." In both of which assumptions he is wrong. Prayer is communion with God and praise is an element of prayer. God can be praised in the spoken and spontaneous prayer. So the long drawn out argument as to the necessity of inspiration for formulating the praise of God breaks in pieces. If we are required to pray anything like "Hallowed be thy Name" then it is not true that

"such a task requires the perfection of knowledge of God and humanity which is beyond the natural capacity of the highest angel." And as for the Psalms being only or mainly praises, that word is used as a title to describe only one of the psalms, though it is applicable to many, while the word "prayers" is used in the inscriptions of the psalms several times and describes a whole division of the psalms. "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended." Dr. Chalmers' translation of this as "Hymns" is a confusion of the two Hebrew words—Tehillah, praise, and Tephillah, prayer,—which surprises us. If we have a prescribed hymn-book we surely have a prescribed prayer-book, and, as Dr. Chalmers argues in the case of the songs of Mary and Elizabeth, if the inspired men of the New Testament offered other prayers, "such use could by no possible logic be construed as a warrant to compose" our own voluntary prayers to God.

If we can sing the 51st Psalm, "Have mercy upon me, O God," why not sing the Lord's Prayer?

But we further deny that the whole book of Psalms was ever intended for singing in Christian worship. Take the imprecatory psalms, for instance. The man who makes them now the expression of his own feelings is like the disciple who wished the Master to call down fire from heaven upon the Samaritan city, he knows not of what spirit he is of. We can read the 9th verse of the 137th psalm, "Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones," and remember that this was the old dispensation, when Israel had to be cut off from the contamination of heathenism even by the extermination of their enemies, in order to preserve the truth of God; while we live in the new dispensation, in which we are commanded to save the heathen with the Gospel. But we emphatically decline to sing to the praise of God:

Yea truly shall that man be blest,
And with triumphal honor crowned,
Who rends thy children from the breast
To dash them bleeding on the ground,

and we doubt if that is a popular verse among our brethren even though Dr. Chalmers asserts that "No one can find in (the psalms) the mark of limitation." We commend by way of contrast the Christian interpretation of this psalm, beginning "I love thy Kingdom, Lord." We are taught in James that "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless . . ." We know that if a wicked man in this community were to die, our A. R. P. brethren would be as swift as any Christians in endeavoring to provide a home and food and education and religious teaching for his needy orphans. The superintendent of our orphanage was a minister of that church. But would it not be a little inconsistent to help the children of that wicked man and then to sing while taking up the collection:

Let there be none to pity him,
Nor any help to lend,
Nor to his children, fatherless,
His mercy to extend.

And this brings us to a position that is as impregnable as Gibraltar. The Jews had the true faith. Their worship was prescribed even to the minutest details. But with Christ Judaism was fulfilled. When that Samaritan woman found out that Christ was a prophet she sprung a little denominational question upon him while he was talking about eternal life. And Jesus said to her that neither at Jerusalem nor on this mountain shall men worship the Father. "But the hour cometh when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." That abolished "forms of worship" forevermore. The Saviour sang one of the Psalms at the last supper. He quoted one of them on the cross. But he did not mean them to fetter the devotions of the true worshippers, any more than he meant that we should use the very words of his own matchless prayers and them only. Worship that is spiritual is spontaneous. It is independent of time and place and memory and the written page. When the disciples were rejoicing over the release of Peter and John, they lifted up their voices to God in the Second Psalm. We have no doubt that they sang it. But they improvised ere they were through and we have the hymn that is so beautifully rendered in the Oratorio of St. Paul, "Grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness, they may speak thy word." In speaking of the spiritual gifts which the disciples had under the special dispensation of the Spirit, the composition of hymns was evidently one. In I Corinthians, 14:26, Paul says, "Every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a rev-

elation." Dr. Chalmers does not quote this passage. The last four verses of the eleventh chapter of Romans, beginning, "O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God" are a poetic mingling of the familiar Psalter with Paul's own composition. We think it would have been no sin for Paul to have set that to music, though Dr. Chalmers makes the point that Mary only "said" the Magnificat and there is no evidence that either she or Paul were guilty of singing such praise; although, again, Dr. Chalmers is committed to the theory that praises are to be sung. We confess that we are unable to help him out of this dilemma.

In the Modern Reader's Bible the following from the First Epistle of Timothy is cast into poetic form on the page:

He who was manifested in the flesh,
Justified in the Spirit,
Seen of Angels,
Preached among the nations,
Believed on in the world,
Received up in glory.

And in Second Timothy:

For if we died with him,
We shall also live with him;
If we endure,
We shall also reign with him,
If we shall deny him,
He also will deny us;
If we are faithless,
He abideth faithful,
For he cannot deny himself.

This is certainly poetry. It is an ode, and spiritual. Scholars whom neither Dr. Chalmers nor we are able to dispute tell us that these two are early Christian hymns which Paul probably quoted as already familiar to Timothy. We do not believe that there would be any harm in setting them to music and singing them as well as "saying" them.

So that it is by no means clear that in the only other New Testament reference to the word "psalms," than those we have quoted, Paul meant the Hebrew Psalter exclusively. That he included it in his thought, as a Jew would to his dying day, we believe. We believe that he sang a psalm in the Philippian jail. But the expression, "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" is a perfectly general one. And if the psalms and hymns did refer to the psalter, spiritual songs mean songs that are spiritual, and when a song is spiritual, no matter where it is found we can carry out the Apostle's injunction and sing it. Nor can we admit that a spiritual song is an inspired song in the modern sense of that word. All spiritual life and thought and devotion is from the Spirit, and we judge that a sermon or a prayer or a song is spiritual, when it manifests in its character spiritual truth and in its effects the life of the Spirit. What would Dr. Chalmers do with the fact that in the Moody meetings, probably as many people were converted to God through the singing of simple spiritual songs, with a Bible text at the top, as there are members of the Associate Reformed Church or will be for many years? What God has cleansed we should be careful to call common.

We pass by the arrogance that draws the analogy between the stand of the A. R. P. brethren for the sin of hymn-singing and the faithful few who stood by the cross, the inference being that the rest of the Christian world is classified with the howling Jerusalem mob that crucified Christ. Why should the sentiments of a few thousand "fallible men" be any more conclusive than the sentiments of millions, when the many claim that they are worshipping God as truly as the few? But Dr. Chalmers begs the question almost before he states it. We pass by the quotations from Hodge and Girardeau with the remark that these men, who made such an earnest stand for the fundamental principle, that God shall be worshipped according to his own prescription, did not believe in the exclusive use of the Psalter and wrote against it. We pass by the quotation from the Confession of Faith, with the remark that Psalm-singing was too small a subject for the discussion of the Westminster Divines, and that they were treating the subject of idolatry in the passage quoted. Nor do we undertake to defend Christian Hymnology. It is a mountain that can be seen from afar to be impregnable. We call attention to the *reductio ad absurdum* of Dr. Chalmers' own argument in which he classifies all the sacred hymns that have been the inspiration and the joy and the comfort and the very instrument of conversion for millions of God's saints, with operatic music and patriotic songs and little ditties for amusement and entertainment. He is

compelled to take this position. The songs differ only in degree. The Psalms are the only songs that can be used in the worship of God. Therefore the only loophole for the singing of anything else is that the element of worship must be eliminated and the idea of "amusement" interjected. We do not mean to be irreverent. But fancy the absurdity of the logic that is compelled to put in the same category, "Sally in Our Alley," or "Peek-a-Boo" with "There is a Fountain Filled with Blood," "Rock of Ages," "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," "In the Cross of Christ I Glory," "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name." Fancy singing for amusement, "Twas on That Dark and Doleful Night." Or take even a sweet lyric like, "Annie Laurie," and classify it with this translation of the old Latin Hymn,

Jesu, dulcis memoria.

Jesus, the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills my breast,
But dearer far thy face to see,
And in thy presence rest.

Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame,
Nor can the memory find,
A sweeter sound than thy blest name,
O Saviour of mankind.

O hope of every contrite heart,
O joy of all the meek,
To those who fall how kind thou art,
How good to those who seek.

And they who find thee find a bliss,
Nor tongue nor pen can show,
The love of Jesus—what it is,
None but his loved ones know.

With all the work there is to be done in the world in the way of rebuking evil and destroying vice, with all the great task of bringing the Gospel to the hearts of men at home and in heathen lands, with worldliness creeping within and flaunting itself without the Church, does it not look as if a Church of Jesus Christ and especially a Presbyterian Church might be at a more profitable business than that of teaching its people that it is wrong to sing such a hymn as the above, and forbidding its members any expression of vocal praise that was given to the world after Christ had come and his salvation had been fully known to men? As the constitution stands now a godly man can be excommunicated from that church for singing "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

The position of the Presbyterian Church may be stated in a few words. Among the acts of worship which God has appointed is that of praise. Praise may be offered in the act of prayer; in the reading of an ascription of praise taken from any part of the Bible, or from human writings which are based upon revealed truth; or in song. But the service of song is not confined to the act of praise. Song is also a valuable medium for the inculcation of divine truth. In prayer the worshipper speaks to God. In the sermon the minister speaks for God. The service of song includes both speaking to God and speaking for God.

It is universally admitted that in the reading of God's word we may interject a human comment based upon that Word. That in preaching we use human words to set forth the Divine truth contained in the Scripture. That in prayer we use our own words, which to be acceptable must also be in accord with the teachings of God's Word.

Moreover we have a model prayer, taught us by Christ himself. We have other prayers contained in the Psalms and in other parts of the Bible, as for example the Dedicatory prayer of Solomon, the prayer of Hezekiah, the prayers of our Saviour as recorded in John's Gospel. Yet no one claims that we must confine ourselves to these forms of prayer except by way of general direction. We have also model sermons and addresses, in which God spake by his Son or by the prophets to men. Such are the sermon on the Mount, the sermon of Peter after Pentecost, the sermon of Paul at Athens. Yet no one claims that we are to confine ourselves to the words of these sermons, while their matter and form are instructive to the highest degree. Therefore we argue by "good and necessary inference," that while we have model hymns, for praising God and model songs for teaching men God's truth, such as are contained in the Psalter, and in the historical books of the Old Testament and the New we are not required to use the very words of such models, either for purposes of praise or instruction, since it is impossible that the mere fact of accompanying words with music should make a radical and vital difference.