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**North Road Chapel (Evangelical)
BIDEFORD**

Lessons from John's Gospel

chapter seventeen

"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee "(John 17:1).

It is the last phrase which is the subject of this article. Our Lord was about to go to the cross, that fearful hour was about to strike, yet He prays that He might be glorified. On the surface this is an enigma, for to be crucified on a cross was a symbol of the **curse**, Golgotha depicted ignominy and the lowest possible abasement; there certainly was no glory to be seen at that event. The very order of nature was out of course; at midday the sun was blacked out, the earth shook on its axis, rocks were rent asunder, the centurion in charge and his ruthless soldiers feared greatly. Wherein then lay this glory for which Christ prayed, as He faced being made a curse.

Earlier in His ministry on earth the Lord spake of the Holy Spirit who as yet was not given, because He Himself was not yet **glorified** (cf John 7:39). The third Person of the Trinity was not sent down until after the ascension. Peter wrote concerning the *"sufferings Christ, and the glory that should follow"* (1 Peter 1:11). In asking to be glorified, the Saviour had His resurrection and return to heaven in mind. By this. He was *"declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead"* (Romans 1:4). This is the glory which He anticipated and for which He prayed.

By going into death, the realm of the prince of darkness and his legions, Christ *"spoiled principalities and powers, He made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it"* (Colossians 2:15). *"When He ascended*

up on high, He led captivity captive" (Ephesians 4:8). Charles Wesley captured something of the thrill of this triumph when He wrote:

"Our Lord is risen from the dead!
Our Jesus is gone up on high!
The powers of hell are captive led,
Dragged to the portals of the sky".

"Wherefore (because of what was accomplished by Christ's death and resurrection), *God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"* (Philippians 2:9-11). This is the glory which **followed** His sufferings, as Peter stated in His epistle. The result of this is that the gospel of God's great salvation is preached unto sinful men. *"Through this man"*, (the once crucified, now glorified one), *"is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins"* (Acts 13:38). What glory accrues to both God and Christ as the gospel is preached, whether it be in them that are saved or them that perish; the one being a saviour of death unto death, the other a saviour of life unto life (cf 2 Corinthians 2:15,16).

Hundreds of years previously it was prophesied that One would come, through whose work and witness many would be called, and great glory brought to His name. That prophecy reads: *"Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He hath glorified thee"* (Isaiah 55:4,5). Christ was sent by God to be the true and faithful witness. This fact He clearly stated before Pilate, *"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth"* (John 18:37). He is also the

leader and commander of God's people, the Great Head of the Church. He calls a nation that men know not, described by Peter as *"a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people"* (1 Peter 2:9). These people are called out of nations which knew not God, yet under the gospel's invincible power they are said to run unto Christ. Such is the dominion and authority of the glorified Saviour that those for whom He died (His elect), although born in sin and *"by nature the children of wrath even as others"* (Ephesians 2:3), yet they are made willing in the day of His power (cf Psalm 110:3). They have fled for refuge and laid hold of that hope which is in Christ (cf Hebrews 6:18). This is *"the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church"* (Ephesians 1:19-22).

All this gives great meaning to our Lord's words to the two on the Emmaus road when He said, *"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?"* (Luke 24:26). Through this is seen that the glory given to Christ as the Mediator was consequent upon His humiliation and suffering. What does this teach us? In praying that God would glorify Him, Christ was asking for that which had been promised already. Earlier in John's gospel the Lord said, *"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father glorify Thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again"* (John 12:27,28). In the light of this promise, why did Christ petition His Father further on the same matter?

There is another example for us in this. Neither the promises of God nor His providence are to inhibit us in praying. There is a most

important word in this connection recorded by an Old Testament prophet, *"And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it. Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them"* (Ezekiel 36:35-37). From the ruins and desolation of the captivity, God **promised** to restore the land and cause the derelict cities to be re-built. This was a firm, immutable promise. *"I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it"*. But then is added, *"Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, do it for them"*.

The fact of God's promise was not to deter prayer. In that wondrous pattern prayer which the Lord gave, His people are instructed to pray, *"Thy kingdom come"* (Matthew 6:10). Surely nothing is more sure and certain than the coming kingdom of God, that **cannot** fail. Nevertheless we are to pray for it. Being assured of a thing by God does not exempt us from prayer, indeed it should engender greater earnestness. When Daniel was given to understand the number of years, he prayed the more fervently (cf Daniel 9:2,3). When Elijah was told of the little cloud and the sound of abundance of rain, he was the more persistent (cf 1 Kings 18:42-44). To pray in this manner is to pray in faith; faith believes what God has said in His Word, entering into the very mind of God on matters revealed to men, ardently praying that His will be done and His purposes speedily brought to fruition for His glory. Christ the Mediator prayed for that which He knew God, in His sovereignty would surely bring about. In this as in all things, He has left an example that we should follow His steps (cf 1 Peter 2:21).

To be continued

W.H.Molland

Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs

What place should hymnody have in the worship of the Lord's people and in their Christian service? If we were to take a poll among those who claim to be Christians we would find a very wide range of opinion. At one extreme are those who would refuse to sing anything at all, or would confine their singing to the psalms, citing the Book of Psalms as the only "Divinely Inspired Hymnbook". At the other extreme we meet those who would see singing as a major part of worship, perhaps looking to Psalm 150 as their inspiration, arranging 'services' which are almost entirely hymn singing sessions under the title 'Morepraise', and giving full freedom to their own creativity in finding new songs to sing on such occasions. There are of course, a very wide range of views and practices which lie between these extremes.

Unless the Word of God is silent on such matters, so that all are free to do as they please, these different ways cannot all be right. Is it merely a matter of personal preference, to suit people's different temperaments, accommodating the quietist and the exuberant, the introvert and the extrovert? In Old Testament times, the approach to God was strictly regulated, His awesome holiness and majesty were emphasized. He remains for us still the same holy and mighty God. While not bound by strict rules, we must in our approach to Him remember that the command to be Holy because He is Holy in Leviticus 11:44 was reiterated in 1 Peter 1:16. Grace does not give us license. Our approach to Him is not to be in a manner to please ourselves, but that He **does** give us guidance in His Word, even in this matter of the use of song in our worship and service of Him.

The references to singing in the New Testament are but few. Apart from direct quotations from the Psalms where their text is given in the doctrinal presentation, there are but two references (both to the

same incident) in the Gospels, one in Acts, some half dozen in the Epistles and three in Revelation. Some of these cannot be said to refer to church worship, but rather relate to the personal exercise of the Lord's people before their God. In addition, there are a few instances where doctrine is expressed in a poetic form, from which we may infer a quotation from an early hymn. This paucity of references suggests that singing was a very minor part of the worship of the church, but that there are some such passages would indicate that it was not entirely absent.

We shall look at the words by which these activities are described, and then go on to look at the various portions where they occur to assess the New Testament evidence for the use of singing.

I. Words

There are three words used in the New Testament to speak of singing. They occur together in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 translated, as in our title, as psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. They may occur as the nouns, as above, or in the related verb forms, to sing a psalm, to sing a hymn.

a) *Psalmos* (Ψαλμος), is transliterated Psalm and the verbal form *Psallo* (Ψάλλω), to sing a Psalm. The meaning is a song of praise, and carries with it the sense of being on, or accompanied by an instrument. This of course, was the custom for the Old Testament psalms: we would see this particularly in Psalm 150, but we find it also in the traditional headings of many of the other psalms in our Authorized Version. This word is used, translated 'psalm', in 1 Corinthians 14:26; Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, as well as the verbal form in James 5:13. In other places *psallo* is translated three times as 'sing', in Romans 15:9 and 1 Corinthians 14:15 (twice) and once as 'make melody' in Ephesians 5:19.

b) *Hymnos* (υμνος), is transliterated ‘Hymn’ with the verbal form *Hymneo* (υμνεω), ‘to sing a hymn’. The sense is similar to ‘a song of praise’, but does not bring the thought of a musical instrument with it. It is used of the Lord and His disciples after the Lord’s Supper in Matthew 26:30 and the parallel account in Mark 14:26, and the two passages in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. It is also translated ‘sing praises’ of Paul and Silas in jail at Philippi and, quoting from Psalm 22:22 in Hebrews 2:12.

c) *Ode* (ωδη), is the root of the spiritual songs of Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. It is often used in its verbal form *ado* (αωδ) ‘to sing an ode’, ‘to give the reading’, ‘sing a song’ as in all references in Revelation 5:9; 14:3 (twice); 15:3. It expresses the poetic form of what is sung.

Those are the words used. We must now see how they relate to our practice in the church.

2. Singing in the Church: the Evidence.

We propose working through the Scriptures, looking at the Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles and the Revelation, to see how the use of the words we have just defined relate to New Testament church practice.

a) The Gospels

In both Matthew 26:30 and Mark 14:26 we read that after the institution of the Lord’s Supper, the Lord and the eleven remaining apostles sang a hymn and went out. It was *hymnos*, a song of praise. We have no further information about this hymn, so anything we say is but conjecture. Some believe it to be Psalm 113 or one of the group of Psalms 113-118, which the Jews habitually sang at the end of the Passover meal. This would have expressed continuity with the old order and would appear to be a wrong deduction. In Luke 22:17, He took the third cup of the Passover, and told them to drink it, but

refused it Himself, effectively saying this was to become obsolete. Why? Because He was about to institute the remembrance feast of a much better sacrifice (Hebrews 9:23), and so was consigning the old Passover to history. So why, after the supper of the New Covenant, sing a Psalm of the Old Covenant, a song which related to Jewish history? Was He not looking forward, leading them in a New Song, one relating to the Supper He had instituted, the better sacrifice He was about to make, and all that He had taught them that evening? Surely we see here a warrant for a song of praise associated with the Lord's Supper, at least immediately after partaking of it.

b) The Acts

The one reference is in Acts 16:25. Paul and Silas, their backs sore, prayed and sang praises to God from the dungeons of the Philippian jail. The word is *hymneo*, to sing hymns, praises. What did they sing? Was it Old Testament psalms or something more directly in praise of their Lord and Saviour for whose name they were suffering? Is not the latter most likely? Perhaps what they sang touched the jailor's heart, although it required an earthquake to move it. However within the context of this article, this singing of praise was a personal exercise of Paul and Silas, not part of a 'church gathering'.

c) The Epistles

The two comprehensive references are those in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. The apostle lists psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Psalms: songs of praise, often accompanied by an instrument. Hymns: simply songs of praise, without mention of an instrument. Spiritual songs: the word for song is 'ode', words in a poetic form, whether or not they rhyme. They would have a rhythm, would be memorable. They were not any ode. Horace's odes, famous as poetry, would not do, nor in our day would Cyril Fletcher's odd odes. Paul qualifies his use of the word 'odes': they are **spiritual**. A true understanding of this would not only disqualify the purely secular

verse of this world, it would dismiss a lot of the doggerel and repetitive chanting which we find in many so-called hymn and chorus books. As spiritual songs, they should rest on God's Word, inspired by the Holy Spirit. They should express not only the spiritual truths of the Word of God, but the **dignity** of it. They should lift the spirits, the souls of those who sing them, to God. Not light, frothy, bubbly man-centred ditties, but rather that which is fit to enter the very courts of heaven, maybe echoing the New Song (the word is ode) of which we read in the Revelation 5:19; 14:3; 15:3, the Song of the Lamb.

In Ephesians 5, while Paul is writing generally to the church, the use of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs seems very much to be a personal exercise. At the end of verse 19 he says they are singing and making melody (*psallo*) in their **hearts** to the Lord. It has a parallel in James 5:13 where he exhorts those who are merry (not merry: drunk, but merry: happy, cheerful, joyful), to sing psalms, for such should be in a position to sing God's praises, not just the Old Testament psalms but songs suitable to their condition. In Ephesians 5:20 Paul suggests some of the subject matter for this singing: giving thanks for all things to God the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such thankfulness should be the spring of our hymnody, not merely mouthing the printed word, but expressing the thoughts of our hearts in our thanks and worship to God. This has to be a personal exercise. We would however, see from Ephesians 5 that this personal desire to praise our God is reflected in the corporate worship of the church. The spiritual exercise of the end of verse 18 is sometimes applied, translating 'yourselves' at the start of verse 19 as 'one to another', to the united praise of the Lord's people. It is united, it is not a babel of confusion, all singing their own songs, different words, different tunes at the same time. No, he says in verse 20, submit yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ. As he said in similar

circumstances to the Corinthians, let everything be done decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Colossians 3:16 has much in common with the passage in Ephesians, but while the same personal exercise of heart is essential, Paul sees this as part of the teaching and admonishing in the church. The psalms and hymns and spiritual songs embody the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42), they make it memorable. The teachings become very much the possession of those who sing them, so that they sing with grace and thankfulness in their hearts. In those days this was particularly important because the New Testament was largely unwritten, and the teachings were not available to be read. These spiritual songs therefore provided a valuable means whereby the doctrine could be remembered. We almost certainly have some excerpts from these 'odes' or ancient hymns preserved for us in the Word of God, for example in 1 Timothy 3:14-16 and 2 Timothy 2:11 -13. These hymns were not to be sung thoughtlessly, in vain repetition like the heathen do (the Lord warned about such practices in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6:7), but thoughtfully, with reflection. Paul said, "*I will sing with the Spirit and with the understanding*" (1 Corinthians 14:15). Anything less would be unspiritual, indeed it could be blasphemous, taking the name of the Lord in vain, contrary to the third commandment (Exodus 20:7).

d) The Revelation

The references in the Book of the Revelation take us beyond the realms of earth and give us a preview of heaven. The songs (odes) are the songs of the redeemed in glory. We see this earthly life as a preparation for heaven where shall be fulfilled that which is but a shadow on earth. These heavenly songs are those of earth transformed. We read of songs in Revelation 5, 14 & 15; we list the verses:

Revelation 5:9. This is the song of the twenty four elders representing the fulness of God's Church in both the old and new covenants, exemplified by the twelve patriarchs and the twelve apostles, all one by faith in Christ Jesus, the Old Testament saints prospectively, we retrospectively, gathered to worship the Lamb, their Redeemer. *"They sung a new song saying, Thou art worthy for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation"*. This is a song we can sing. It is relevant to the Lord's chosen people, but its fulness in verse 10 will finally come to pass in the new heaven and new earth after this present earth is done away with (cf 2 Peter 3:10-13), although there is a sense in which Christ reigns on earth now, not in the world in general, but in the church.

Revelation 14:3 shows us the Lamb enthroned in the new Jerusalem in that new heaven and new earth, with the 144,000 around Him, a full mystic number $12 \times 12 \times 10^3$, signifying the fulness of His elect, the elect of the earth, His redeemed people (v3). They alone could sing this new song. It is specifically the song of the Lord's own people.

Revelation 15:3 gives us two songs, the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. They are sung by God's victorious saints, those who have obtained victory over the beast. They are those who are in Christ, the Son of God, whom John tells us was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil (cf 1 John 3:8). Psalm 90 is specifically stated in the A.V. heading to be a song of Moses, and we have his song at the end of his life in Deuteronomy 32:1-44, songs of praise to God. However the song of Moses here does not refer directly to these Old Testament songs, but speaks of the Old Testament church combining with the New Testament church, as the **one** Church of God's elect and redeemed people, singing together, the song of Moses and of the Lamb, giving all praise and worship to the Lord God Almighty.

What then do these references in Revelation tell us about our songs, our hymns in the church? Surely it can only be that, if we are preparing for heaven while on earth, our hearts should be filled with praise and adoration to our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. So our earthly hymns should be songs of praise. How can we not praise so great a God and so mighty a Saviour? Our hymns should be God and Christ centred, not introspective and man centred. They are reaching up to heaven. They should be fit vehicles for the praise of Him who is our holy and omnipotent God.

Thus the singing of hymns is a valid part of the worship of God. Hymns based on New Testament doctrine have as full a sanction from Scripture as the Old Testament Psalms. Indeed, those who confine their songs of praise to the Psalms are not availing themselves of the fulness which the Word of God would warrant. Not only so, such a restriction impoverishes their worship, for in the Psalms they remain in the shadows, not coming out into the full light of the gospel as revealed in the New Testament. How strange that those whom Christ redeemed should not praise God in song for the fulness of all that He accomplished, but should restrict themselves to oblique, shadowy references to Him, as if their worship was some arcane mystery, only to be understood by the initiates. There are hymns based on the Psalms, for instance some of those by Isaac Watts, which expand the expressions with the hindsight of New Testament truth to tell more directly of Christ, but many still retain the flavour of the Old Testament theology. Why not go all the way and sing psalms (that is, songs of praise with musical accompaniment), and hymns and spiritual songs directly referring to the wonders of what the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished and the fulness of His promises to His people? We give praise for all God has done.

Let us therefore sing ‘new songs’, hymns based directly on New Testament truth. However, these ‘new songs’ should be reverent, they

should be a fit vehicle to praise our holy and almighty God, they should exalt the Saviour and lift the hearts of His people. The tunes and any musical accompaniment should be dignified, not the ephemera of the latest popular fashions, but suited to the worship of the eternal God. It should not be vainly repetitious, going over the same line or lines again and again, but a true progression of thought which expresses the wonders of our God and His eternal counsels. Care should be taken that the instrumental accompaniment is suitable to help the praise and worship, but not dominating it. The purpose is not to provide musical entertainment, a concert, for the Lord's people, nor to make the young people feel wanted as they gyrate in the sexually suggestive manner of the modern 'pop' groups, loudly strumming their guitars and drowning out the words of the 'songs of praise'. The purpose is to worship our holy God, to praise Him for His unspeakable gift in Christ. This should be in the forefront of our thoughts, If the 'accompaniment' in any way conflicts with this purpose, then cut it out or at least reduce it to its proper supporting role; proportion is all important. Hymns are a very small part of the worship as exemplified in Scripture and they should not dominate over the reading and exposition of the Word of God.

The conclusion is that a good hymn book, with Scriptural truths reverently expressed, with dignified tunes is a valuable help in the worship of the Church, but it must be used aright and not become an end in itself. May all the Lord's people value God's provision of a sound hymn book, and use it aright to His praise and glory.

J.R.Hulett M.A., D.Phil. (Oxon)

"I deny not, but that such hymns and spiritual songs composed by good men, uninspired, may be made use of: provided care is taken that they be agreeable to the sacred writings, and to the analogy of faith, and are expressed as much as may be in Scripture language; of such sort were those Tertullian speaks of used in his time, as were either out of the Holy Scripture, or of a man's own composure".

Dr John Gill

***Recollections of Spiritual Work in the County of Devon in Generations Past* cont'd**

“We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have what work Thou didst in their days, in the times of old” (Psalm 44:1).

The main character in this reminiscence is Robert Gribble, a draper in Barnstaple in the very early years of the last century. For this glimpse into the working of God through this humble man, one is indebted to the writings of the late Mr G.H.Lang in his book **“God at Work on His Own Lines”**. It is from this publication that extracts are taken.

Concerning the areas Chittlehamholt and Chittlehampton mentioned in the previous edition, Mr Lang in his lifetime (early 20th century), had first hand knowledge. He writes:

“Early in this century a chief landowner of this immediate district was Mr W.R.Moore. Several times I enjoyed the generous hospitality of Mr & Mrs Moore in their lovely mansion, which they kept filled with guests from many parts. From conviction they had left the Established Church, had thereby cut themselves off from the county society in which they had moved, and had united with the humble company meeting at the small hall mentioned. It was a gracious sight on Sunday morning to see the squire sometimes taking round the holy bread and cup to his own servants and tenants. He was a barrister and magistrate. In the 1914 war he awoke to the fact that, as a magistrate, he might be compelled to send to prison brethren in Christ, whose conscience would not suffer them to serve in the army. Their convictions were his, and he resigned from the bench. God is still honoured by a few faithful witnesses in that social realm”.

The humble company and small hall mentioned was, under God, the result of Robert Gribble’s ministry in previous generations. (Sadly,

like so many little ‘Bethels’, this chapel has recently closed as faithful men and women have been called home. Ed.)

“Gribble has mentioned with joy that, out of churches which he commenced, there went forth two brethren to spread the gospel in India. It should be said that, later than the period of his narrative, there went from High Bickington, which church also he founded, the greatly honoured Henry Payne, whose long labours in Barcelona, Spain were so greatly used of God.

The narrative proceeds to tell of similar labours around North Devon. In 1839 he removed from High Bickington to Bow, and thence to Coleford. The story is one continual account of remarkable conversions, of violent or covert opposition, of the Lord being victorious in saving many, of churches being established and halls being built, most of which churches are alive after one hundred years.

Surely the reason for this on its human side, is that believers were trained from the first, to see in Christ exalted their only Head and their sufficient Resource, to trust Him to supply the recurring need of spiritual ministry, and to respect His Word as their only guide book and rule.

Gribble reverts again to the important topic of ministry to maintain the work after the evangelist has moved on:

I had much cause for thanksgiving while retracing the events of the last seven years previous to my removal (in 1846). The gospel during that period had been introduced into five different places, in four of which many souls had been converted; the whole number being not less than from eighty to one hundred; and four dear brethren remained to minister among them, all of whom had been raised up by the Lord during that period, and three of them remain there still. But for this, I should not have so plainly seen my way to remove.”

To be continued.

Editorial

Calls are being made today by some in non-conformist, evangelical sections of Christendom, for a return to the teaching and practice of the Protestant Reformers and Puritans. We are told that in order to secure **purity in worship**, we must get back to that which was taught and practised by them. Is such a call valid? Indeed, is it right?

Cranmer's Book of Common Prayer and The Westminster Confession of Faith and Directory of Public Worship are two historical works which figure prominently in the thinking of those who insist on this teaching and practice. Within these two handbooks there is much sound doctrine, but there is also that which is erroneous; to use either of these as a basis of belief and standard of practice is a matter of utmost gravity. Does not the Book of Common Prayer contain the very rudiments of baptismal regeneration? (p.294,295); a profusion also of holy days and festivals to be observed as listed in the Calendar (p.16-27), not one of these days having Biblical warrant except the Sabbath? As for national identification and the constitution of that section of Christendom which the Book of Common Prayer represents, there is nothing more alien to New Testament teaching. Yet in a recent publication by a once-dissenting body, it was stated that Cranmer produced a Book of Common Prayer which was a faithful expression of Reformed worship. 'Reformed' worship maybe, but not according to Holy Writ.

Neither can the Westminster Confession be set up as the touch stone for the ordering of worship, for within its Directory is set out the sprinkling of infants (p.382-384). Of this practice it is said, "That it is instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ: That it is a seal of the covenant of grace of our engrafting into Christ and of our union with Him, of remission of sins, regeneration, adoption, and life eternal: That the water, in baptism, representeth and signifieth both the blood of Christ which taketh away all guilt of sin, original and actual; and the

sanctifying virtue of the Spirit of Christ against the dominion of sin and the corruption of our sinful nature: That baptizing, or sprinkling and washing with water, signifieth the cleansing from sin by the blood and for the merit of Christ, together with the manifestation of sin, and rising from sin to newness of life, by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ". All this and much more pertaining to covenant theology is found in this volume, plus the approval by an Act of Parliament, giving strength and the force of law. (p 371). The linking of church and state is an integral part of 'reformed' dogma. A call to return to this by an independent, baptistic, non-conformist is inconsistent; ours is not a man-published 'Directory', rather is it 'Scripture alone', that which the Protestant Reformers professed but only practised in part.

'Sung praise' is another matter involved in the so-called 'purity of worship' of the Reformers and Puritans. Dogmatic assertions are made by them that nothing outside of the one hundred and fifty Psalms contained in the Old Testament should find a place in the public worship of God. This is causing concern and confusion in the minds of a number of people but can such positiveness be warranted?

Many Scriptures are referred to in propagating this argument and an avalanche of Hebrew and Greek introduced in an attempt to substantiate their position; this leaves the average person bewildered, and the plain, specific words of Holy Writ lose their meaning. The proponents of exclusive psalmody insist that psalms, hymns and spiritual songs as referred to in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 are one and the same and are exclusive to the Old Testament Book of Psalms, that in the New Testament age they **only** are to be sung, and that without musical accompaniment. Other men equally qualified both spiritually and academically, disagree. Albert Barnes in Notes on the New Testament' commenting on Ephesians 5:19 says, "One thing is proved clearly by this passage, that there were other

compositions used in the praise of God than the Psalms of David; and if it was right then to make use of such compositions, it is now. They were not merely ‘psalms’ that were sung, but there were hymns and odes” The ‘J.F.B. Commentary’ states, “Psalms – generally accompanied by an instrument. Hymns – in direct praise to God (cf Acts 16:25; 1 Corinthians 14:26; James 5:13). Songs – the general term for lyric pieces; ‘spiritual’ is added to mark their being here restricted to sacred subjects”. Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones preaching on this same verse said, “Practically all the great commentators of the last two hundred years have held that there was a difference between psalms and hymns and spiritual songs a psalm means ‘a sacred song designed to be sung with the accompaniment of a musical instrument’ a hymn is essentially and primarily a song of praise to God, a Divine song ‘spiritual songs’. What is a song? An ‘ode’, a ‘lyric’”. Lloyd-Jones points out that there are many lyrics, but in the worship of God they must be “*spiritual*”.

It is important to carefully examine the statements made by those who insist on unaccompanied exclusive psalmody.

(1.) It has been said that if a company of believers have an organ to accompany the singing, then let them have the flutes, trumpets, drums and so on, even a full blown orchestra, for there is no difference. This a reckless, extravagant statement which is grossly unfair to many faithful companies of believers who have an organ for one reason only; that is to lead the singing and keep it in an orderly, God-honouring manner, taking as their mandate 1 Corinthians 14:40.

There are numerous fellowships with only a few members, none of whom can raise a tune, nor sing together as a group, yet with the help of an organ they are enabled to join in sung praise in a manner, glorifying to God. In larger congregations also, the musical accompaniment can be of great assistance. In no way is the

instrument used for a display of talent, musical expertise or entertainment. To infer that an organ, used in this manner is no different to the ‘jazz’ and ‘rock’ of pop star evangelism, is grossly uncharitable and unjust.

(2.) It has been said that if an assembly of the Lord’s people use a hymn book of traditional hymns as opposed to the Psalter, they dare not criticize the modern compositions of today’s so-called gospel songs, because they do not have a leg to stand on, all being of human composition. By inference Toplady, Watts, Bonar, Kent, Chapman, Gadsby and hundreds of other men of God, are placed on the same platform as Graham Kendrick, Cliff Richard and others of like ilk. Such statements are indicative of unrestrained fanaticism and can never be taken seriously.

(3.) It is held to be quite in order to give thanks and praise to God in prayer, using uninspired language, that is **spoken** praise; but **sung** praise must be confined to the one hundred and fifty Psalms of the Old Testament, God having given us sixty five books to be **read** and one book from which to **sing**. This raises a few further questions:

a.) If the book of Psalms is for **sung** praise, should these Psalms ever be read, and would it be in order to introduce a human composition in public worship, provided it was **read** and not **sung**?

b.) It is claimed that it was quite appropriate for the Westminster Assembly to paraphrase the Old Testament Psalms, so that they might be sung to metrical rhythm (such paraphrasing often makes the truth contained less understandable). Invariably is the tune announced to which the Psalm must be sung. Is this also reckoned to be inspired? If a preacher was to give his public Scripture reading from ‘**The Living Bible**’, then reformed men would hold up their hands in horror saying, ‘That is only a paraphrase, it is not the inspired Scriptures’. How right they would be! Therefore how inconsistent to paraphrase the Psalms and yet claim to be singing inspired words. It

is possible to become so obsessed with a particular matter that one becomes unbalanced, even nonsensical? Sing hymns based on the Psalms, yes indeed, but also sing hymns based upon other parts of Holy Writ, and to the simple accompaniment of an organ, if the singing would otherwise not be decent and in order (cf 1 Corinthians 14:40).

(4.) The assumption is made that only through the Psalms can sung praise be acceptable to God. Vast numbers of Christians repudiate this claim. Can we only sing praises to God in Old Testament language, which often has a distinct Jewish, national slant? Theologians might know that Christ and the Church is often portrayed in them, but how many in the congregation would perceive such hidden depth of truth? How then could they be said to sing with the spirit and with the understanding (cf 1 Corinthians 14:15)? To impose this restriction robs the people of God of being able to sing unto the Lord in language which is really meaningful to them. Those of the New Covenant are to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free and not to become entangled with the bondage of the Old (cf Galatians 5:1).

It is easy to accuse Rome and Anglicans of following Old Covenant ritual, but let not true, evangelical non-conformists be guilty of the same error by insisting on Old Covenant language only in sung praise by the New Covenant people of God. Who would deprive the Lord's people of singing such majestic words as "The Lord is King", "All hail the power of Jesus' name", "Crown Him with many crowns", "Immortal honours rest on Jesus' head", "When I survey the wondrous cross", "Sovereign grace o'er sin abounding" and hundreds more?

Let those who wish to practise exclusive psalmody do so, but let them not become fanatical in their censuring of others.

Visiting Preachers D.V.

Lord's Days

19 July 1998	Mr R. D. Steward	(Cradley Heath)
9 August 1998	Mr J. Thackway	(Holywell)
6 September 1998	Mr R. J. Hooper	(Saltash)

Thursdays

2 July 1998	Mr F. Stanbury	(Bow)
9 July 1998	Mr F. Stanbury	(Bow)

Faithfulness

We have little to do with success – that belongs to the Lord, but we have everything to do with faithfulness. It is that which is required and expected at our hands. The one grand point indispensable in a steward is, that “*he be found faithful*” (1 Corinthians 4:2). It is the faithfulness of the steward that constitutes him a good servant, and it is the want of faithfulness that makes him wicked (cf Matthew 25:21, 23, 26). Oh! to be faithful, whether the trust be little or much.

John Dickie

He who would work in the field of the world,
Must work with a faith sublime,
For the seed he sows must lie in the earth,
And wait for God's good time.
But, nevertheless, the harvest is sure,
Though the sower the sheaves may not see
For never a word was spoken for Him
But will ring through eternity.

Anon.