

—this seems to me what is desirable, under the free economy of the gospel.

Beyond all question, the Book of Psalms is the noblest hymn book as well as the sublimest prayer book—a model of devotional praise and prayer for all time. And just as we do not feel ourselves restricted, in our prayers, to the words of the Psalms; but while using them as the great substratum and help in devotion, we feel at liberty to give expression to our desires in language prompted by the emotions of the heart, so we feel at liberty to use words in our praise over and above those contained in the Psalter. There is no evidence that Old Testament saints were forbidden to praise God in language other than that of the Psalms. Isaiah's "rapt, prophetic fire" breaks out in many a glorious hymn of praise, which New Testament worshippers gladly take up and prolong, applying them to Christ, "The child born," "The Son given," whose

"Sacred blood hath washed our souls
From sin's polluted stain."

Habakkuk rises into a sublime psalm at the close of his prophecy. Can it be wrong in us to versify and sing a part of it in our 32nd Paraphrase? And when we employ, in the same way, the spiritual songs of the New Testament, the angelic Advent hymn, the songs of Mary and Simeon, do we present an unauthorized offering of praise?—If we may put into metre and sing the Doxology of John, or Paul's rapturous outpourings in the 8th chapter of Romans, why may we not accept, as a vehicle of our praise, those other hymns which beautifully and touchingly express the very ideas of scripture? Why may we not lawfully sing such impressive and expressive compositions as "Rock of ages cleft for me," or "Jesus lover of my soul"? If even the Jew was not restricted, in prayer or praise, to the very words of the ancient oracles of God, is it conceivable that we, under the free and expansive economy of the gospel, have our liberty so curtailed that we are not to go beyond the bounds of David's Psalms in our "service of song"? Assuredly, that is not the spirit of the gospel. As ages roll on, the great and eternal

truths, on which our faith rests, assume new aspects and present new relations to the varying experiences and widening views of the christian life; and thus demand fresh expression in prayer, and new responses in spiritual song. So long as prayer, praise and preaching accord with the everlasting verities of the Word of God, and are modelled after the pattern showed us in the Book, we need not fear to exercise the liberty bequeathed to us by Christ, and to pray, praise and preach "as the spirit gives us utterance." It is indeed inconceivable that christians are to exclude from their praises alone, the one name by which they can be saved, while to every sermon and prayer that name imparts their fragrance and power; and that while, in prayer, we ask everything in His name, in praise we are to ask nothing.

It is not needful, however, to prolong argument on this point, as the highest authority in our Church has given its sanction to the use of spiritual songs, in addition to those contained in the Psalter; and the number of those that we may use, is but a question of expediency and detail. But then, many good men dread to encourage the singing of hymns, lest the Psalms should be lost sight of. The fear is groundless. The intrinsic excellence of the Psalms will for ever secure them a place in the service of song. There is sublime poetry in many parts of the Bible, but the Psalms are, in structure and expression, intended for music, and are not complete unless chanted or sung, or accompanied, in some shape, with musical modulation. They are, in reality, "prayers, or devotional compositions intended to be sung." For three thousand years, the Church has been pouring out her soul to God in these lofty paeans of devotion; and no dispensation can raise us above the reach or the need of them. Whether the soul is throbbing with gratitude, burning with love, trembling with hope, or bowing in sorrow and penitence, it finds all its emotions truthfully and fervently expressed in the Psalms. All that the awakened soul hopes from God, or fears from earth and hell, or suffers from sin and the flesh—all that it believes, re-