

The connexion of the next clause, "singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord," has been variously understood. Some connect "singing" with the previous words, as explanatory of the speaking to one another. "Their speech was to be sung, or they were to be singing as well as speaking," as Dr. Eadie explains it. Conybeare translates, "Let your singing be of psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs." Others connect "singing" and "making melody" with the words "in your hearts." Farther, some take the words "singing and making melody in your hearts," or, "making melody in your heart," as a subordinate member of the preceding sentence, and describing the spirit and nature of the singing required. Others take the words as a distinct clause, describing a different kind of singing. The best modern critics adopt the latter view, and understand the words as commanding the singing of the inward heart. The difference of meaning, according to these variations in the construction, are but slight, and the purport of the whole is very succinctly stated in Conybeare's note:—"When you meet, let your enjoyment consist not in fulness of wine, but fulness of the spirit; let your songs be, not the drinking songs of heathen feasts, but psalms and hymns, and their accompaniments, not the music of the lyre, but the melody of the heart; while you sing them, not the praise of Bacchus, but of the Lord Jesus Christ."

The terms of the parallel passage in Colossians (ch. iii. 16) are so similar as not to require any explanatory remark. "Let the word of God 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."

It may be observed that most interpreters regard these words as not limited in their application to public worship, but as referring also to the love feasts and other private meetings of Christians. The testimony of early writers shows that religious singing was a common exercise of the primitive Christians, independently of divine service properly so called.

The epistle to the Hebrews was written with the special design of showing the relation between the Mosaic and the New Testament economies, and we have in it a passage of some importance as bearing on this subject. (Chap. xiii. 15). "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name." The term translated "sacrifice of praise" is the same used to denote the thank-offering of the Mosaic law. (Lev. vii. 12; see also Ps. l. 23, cxvi. 17, 18). "The sacrifice of thanksgiving," consisted in the presentation of an ox, sheep or goat, which was brought by the offeror to the altar, and slain at the south side of it. The priest received the blood and sprinkled it around the altar. The fat was burned upon the altar. The breast and the shoulder were reserved for the priest, but the rest was for the offeror to feast upon with his family and friends. These offerings were sometimes expressions of gratitude for particular mercies, and sometimes a general acknowledgment of God's daily and continual kindness." It was a saying of the rabbis that "in the future time all sacrifices will cease, but praises will not cease." Under the New Testament dispensation no such material thank-offerings are required. Christians are under special obligations to thankfulness, but their feelings are to be expressed,—not by material thank-offerings—not by a feast on the bodies of slain beasts, with its usual accompaniments of song and tabret and dance, but by the voice, declaring the high praises of the Lord, "that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name." The phrase "fruit of our lips," is the same that is used in the Septuagint in Hos. xiv. 2, where the Hebrew and our translation have "the calves of our lips." In place of all the thank-offering of beasts, there is to be now the use of our lips in praise. The phrase "giving thanks to his name" must be connected with lips, "our lips giving thanks to his name." The word translated "giving thanks," properly means "confess," but it is used in the Old Testament as equivalent to a Hebrew word, signifying "to praise," as in Ps. xviii. 49.