

Communications.

PAUL OF SAMOSATA, AND THE PSALMODY QUESTION.

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MR. EDITOR,—What will my good friends, Dr. Blaikie, of Boston, and some brethren in Canada, think of the celebrated Neander, and the not less eminent Mosheim “serving them heirs,” to the atrocious Paul of Samosata, in the matter of an “inspired psalmody?” I use this strong term because both Eusebius in his history, and the synod that condemned his heretical opinions, describe him as far more “a lover of pleasure,” than a “lover of God;” and Dean Millman, in his history, paints him as an idle empty coxcomb; and yet Neander and Mosheim will both tell us, that in banishing from the Church at Antioch the “hymns” and “psalms” (for the terms are used indiscriminately) that celebrate the supreme divinity of Christ, he had no reference to doctrine at all, but simply objected to them because they were “new,” and therefore he thought it best to prohibit their use, and to substitute in their place “the Psalms of David,” “probably,” says Neander, Vol. I., p. 604, “on the same principle which at a later period was advanced by others, that nothing ought to be sung but pieces taken directly from the Holy Scriptures; *probably, therefore, he ordered that in place of those Church hymns, psalmody should be used;*” and Mosheim, in his large history, (not in our compeuds of it,) says substantially the same thing. “Probably”! No; the most improbable of all things. The man was not thinking of any such questions; he was intent only on propagating his own favorite doctrine of the simple and exclusive “humanity” of the blessed Redeemer, and he treated with equal dislike both the “Psalms” and the “hymns” which gave glory to the saviour. Mosheim himself terms him a “cunning courtier,” and parasitical hanger-on at the court of Zenobia, the Queen of Palmyra, his patroness. A fine picture indeed, drawn by these writers,—Zenobia breathing after “the songs of Zion,” and her toady gratifying her devout taste by letting nothing else be sung in his cathedral! Does not Eusebius, not at all a high-flyer in doctrine, or anything else, tell us the reason of his banishing the hymns, namely, that he might put in their place compositions intended to celebrate his own praises, and to gratify his self flattery? And is not this put beyond doubt by the manly and noble letter of the council which condemned him? And who would believe that a clever man like Paul, termed by Mosheim, “*astutus*,” would go to “the Psalms of David” to supply incense to feed his own vanity?

It was not very long after the time of Paul, that Arius vented his heretical opinions, not nearly so gross as those of Paul, but still subversive of the supreme divinity of Christ; and what did he do? Why, he set his notions to music; putting them into verse, and making them the sum and substance of popular ballads; and these we are told took amazingly. Almost all the errorists of those times did the same thing, thus anticipating the celebrated adage of our countryman, Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun: “Give me the making of the ballads of a nation, and I care not who makes its laws.” So strong did the case appear, and the danger so imminent, that the council of Laodicea, in the beginning of the fourth century, prohibited “the singing of uninspired hymns;” and this was confirmed by the council of Chalcedon, one of the first four ecumenical councils, and these councils forbad at the same time the reading of uncanonical books. Says Mr. Riddle, in his “Christian Antiquities,” p. 345: “The orthodox fathers strongly recommend the use of David’s