

(b) *The Devotion of the Christian Life.* What is the devotion of this new man? In the Christian's singing, he is taught and reminded, 'O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is' (Psa 63:1).

(c) *The Way of Wisdom.* In the Psalms, we are instructed in the way of true wisdom: 'The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever' (Psa 111:10). Though the world should parade its own folly, Christians are shown something both ancient and new: the wisdom of God (see also 1 Jn 2:7-8).

(d) *The diligent use of the Lord's Word.* The Lord's songs inform the new man on the right and diligent use of God's Word. 'Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee' (Psa 119:11). What a wonderful provision from the Lord that He should give us songs as a portion of His Word to sing - that we should progress in our sanctification.

(e) *The Christian's Love for the Church.* The new man is likewise instructed in his love for his new family, the household of faith. 'I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD' (Psa 122:1). While this list is in no way exhaustive, these examples demonstrate to us a simple truth: the Psalms instruct the Church on the doctrine and life of the new man. It is because of this we are called to, 'Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright... Sing unto him a new song' (Psa 33:1, 3a).

#### IV

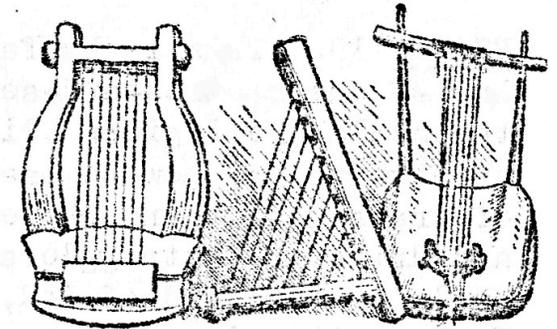
##### **A New Song of the New Covenant**

Ultimately, these Psalms are new songs because they find their truest meaning in the unveiling of the New Covenant - in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so while indeed these are the ancient songs and the heritage of our faith going back to the Jewish Church, they are made

new, as it were, in the New Covenant. This is the work of Him who says from His throne, 'Behold, I make all things new' (Rev 21:5). At the exaltation of Christ, a 'new song' was given by the Spirit (Rev 5:9). On earth, the Spirit shows us the truest sense of these Psalms - so that they are, to us, new. The whole of Scripture points to the person and work of the Lord Christ: 'For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us' (2 Cor 1:20). The promises were always the same, but they find their fulfillment in Christ. Our Lord, by His atoning and propitious death, is the Mediator of the New Covenant (Heb 12:24). The substance of that Covenant of Grace has been the same since the fall (Gen 3:15), but was accomplished by Christ. Those who are in Christ are a new creation (2 Cor 5:17), as the elect throughout all redemption history have been. The Psalms, it follows, while remaining the Church's manual for sung praise, are made new to us in the revelation of Christ Jesus. Indeed, one of the titles for the Psalter found in Scripture points us to this truth: the book of Psalms (along with the whole of the Bible) is 'the Word of Christ' (Col 3:16). It is when we consider the Psalms as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit to mean - as songs of the New Covenant - we will sing all the more fervently: 'O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation' (Psa 95:1).

##### **Conclusion**

The new songs which are commended in Scripture do not refer to a need for ongoing innovation in the Church; but rather to the singing of praise from the Psalms in light of the Gospel going forth to new lands, the Spirit's work in our new heart, the putting on of the new man, and the advent of the New Covenant. May we return to and continue in faithfully singing the praises of God as He has commanded us: by making exclusive use of that wonderfully inspired, authoritative and sufficient Hymnal of the Covenant, the Psalms.



## *O Sing a New Song to the LORD: On Exclusive Psalmody and Its Continuance in the New Covenant*

A Pamphlet to Encourage  
Believers & Covenant Families  
in Faithful Doctrine and Practice

*'O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing  
unto the LORD, all the earth'*

## Introduction

One common argument against the practice of exclusive Psalmody is that, 'The Bible commands us to sing a new song, and so we are commanded to sing human-composed hymns'. The purpose of this pamphlet is to address this genuine critique by faithfully pointing out four ways in which the Psalms, themselves, are these new songs; and that, therefore, we should continue to sing exclusively the Psalms in worship and praise to God.

### I

#### A New Song in a New Land

Psalm 96:1 clearly commands, 'O sing unto the LORD a new song; sing unto the LORD, all the earth'. The Psalms are these new songs which are to be sung in 'all the earth'. In other words, it is the declaration of God's 'glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods' (vv 3-4). The Psalms are these new songs which are to be sung as the Gospel goes forth. Consider four audiences to whom these inspired songs are new, regarding their content:

(a) *A New Song to the Nations*. As the Church advances, it is not only teaching of right doctrine that goes forth, but also of right worship. And so, as the Gospel takes root in a new land, the Church is to be taught God's songs for His praise - the Psalms. This is the clearest sense of Psalm 96:1.

(b) *A New Song to the Newly-Converted*. Throughout those lands in which the Church is already established, as the Lord sees fit to add to their number, the newly-converted are to sing these new songs. Songs which were once foreign and perplexing to the new Christian become songs, 'More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb' (Psa 19:10).

(c) *A New Song to Covenant Children*. As covenant children are being raised in the Lord, everything to them is new, including the beloved songs of Zion.

In the Psalter, the duty of parents is plainly expressed: 'We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done' (Psa 78:4). In teaching these 'new songs' to their children, along with their faithfulness to teach the rest of the Lord's commands, believing parents do just that.

(d) *A New Song to the Visible Church*. How sad it is that, for a large portion of the visible Church, the Lord's songs have been forgotten. 'We must sing a modern song!' they cry out, as the same tawdry verse of the human hymn is repeatedly played before them. May God make these new songs - His Psalms - go to these New Lands.

### II

#### A New Song for the New Heart

The second way in which the Psalms, themselves, are these new songs which we are to sing, is because they are the new songs for the new heart. That is, the Psalms proclaim to us the Gospel, and teach us what it means to be united to Christ. It is only when we have a new heart - the regeneration of our souls by the work of the Spirit to bring us to faith in Christ through the proclamation of His Word (Ezk 36:26, Rom 10:17) - that we may truly sing the Lord's praise from His Word.

(a) *The Psalms proclaim to us the Gospel*. In the Psalter, we are pointed to Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, both directly and by types. He is proclaimed to us (i) *directly*: 'The LORD hath made known his salvation' (Psa 98:2). Who is this salvation? It is the Lord Christ Jesus! 'Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins' (Mt 1:21). The Gospel is also proclaimed to us in the Psalms (ii) *by types*. 'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow' (Psa 51:7). What could this hyssop be, but 'the blood of Jesus Christ his Son [which] cleanseth us from all sin' (1 Jn 1:7)!

(b) *The Psalms teach us what it means to be united to Christ*. Such teaching is two-fold. In the Psalter, we are shown (i) *the sovereign grace of God which alone saves*. 'For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us' (Psa 44:6-7). 'For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.' (Eph 2:8-9). Further, we are shown (ii) *the joyous hope of the salvation given us*. 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered' (Psa 32:1). What a blessing, indeed, that, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus' (Rom 8:1a). Thus, we are commanded because of Christ's work made effectual to us by the regeneration from His Spirit: 'O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things' (Psa 98:1).

### III

#### A New Song of the New Man

Not only are the Psalms new in regards to the new heart (regeneration and justification), but they are also the new song of the new man (Eph 4:24). That is, the Psalms are the God-given songs that perfectly instruct us in our sanctification. This is how Christians may truly be 'teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs' (Col 3:16). Consider five themes in the Psalter on the Christian's sanctification:

(a) *The Blessedness of the Sanctified Life*. The opening words of the Psalter point us directly to this new song for the new man. 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night' (Psa 1:1-2). From the onset, these Spirit-inspired hymns exhort and comfort us in our call to 'Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness' (Eph 4:24).