

“*Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs*”

Col. 3:16. Let the word of Christ 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.

Do psalms, hymns and songs in this verse mean three different kinds of songs, or do all three refer to the same collection of songs?

We are persuaded that all three terms refer to the one collection of songs which we call the Psalter. We believe this for the following reasons:

1. It is common in the Bible to call the same collection of inspired writings by different names, looking at them from different aspects. In Psalm 19th five names are applied to the Word of God; law, testimony, precepts, commandment and ordinances. In the first section of Psalm 119th the word of God is called the law, testimonies, precepts, statutes, commandments and judgments.

2. These three names, "psalms, hymns and songs" are in the titles of the Psalms in the Greek version of the Old Testament. The title, "psalm," is found sixty-seven times, "hymn" six times and "songs" thirty-five times. Paul was raised in a Greek city, Tarsus. He usually quotes from the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, and he was writing to people in a Greek city, Colossae. They understood this Greek version; heard it read every Lord's Day and some had it in their hands.

3. In this Greek version the word "hymn" occurs in the body of the Psalms several times, as in Psalm 22:22 **In the midst of the congregation will I praise (hymn) thee.** Psalm 65:1. **Praise (a hymn) waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion.** Here we have "psalm" and "song" in the title and "hymn" in the first verse. Psalm 72:20 **The prayers (hymns) of David the son of Jesse are ended.**

4. Josephus writing within thirty years of the time of Paul calls the Psalter "The hymns of David", showing the usage of his time.

5. The Psalms, as far as we can learn, were used by Christ and his apostles and were the only collection of spiritual songs in the hands of those to whom Paul wrote. In Matthew and

Mark we read of Christ and his apostles singing a hymn. Bible students are agreed that this was the Great Hallel, Psa. 113 to 118, which the Jews were accustomed to sing at the close of the Passover. A few times Paul in a flight of enthusiasm wrote a beautiful sentence that will scan, but there is no evidence that these were quotations from poems, or that they were sung in the praise of God.

6. In this text Paul makes "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" a basis of teaching and admonition. It is agreed that psalms means the inspired word of God. If hymns and songs mean something else, then whatever one may write and sing in God's praise is put by the apostle on the same basis with the inspired word as a basis of teaching and admonition. Does it seem possible that Paul meant this?

7. The Psalter is a part of the word of Christ, revealing God to man. It is to dwell in us richly in all wisdom. We should learn the Psalms by heart. They are full of Christ the Saviour, His Righteousness, His Suffering, His Redemption, His Resurrection and Ascension. He is Prophet, King, Judge, Rock, Refuge and Shepherd, the Perfect Man.

8. The word "spiritual", coming after these three titles and modifying

them all, confirms the assurance that all are the inspired word of God. Not only are they on spiritual themes, but all are the work of the Holy Spirit.

9. It is admitted that not a single hymn, save those found in the Psalter, has come down to us from the time of Christ, or the time of Paul, or for a hundred years after him. May we apply a Bible term to something not known in Bible times?

10. There is no New Testament Psalter, nor any suggestion by Christ or his apostles that anyone make songs of praise. Even the so-called songs of Zacharias, Mary and Simeon, the Benedictus, the Magnificat and the Nunc Dimittis are introduced by verbs which never mean to sing.

If Christians believe that gifted though uninspired men can make better songs to praise God than those that God himself inspired and appointed to be sung, how shall we defend the unique inspiration of the Bible? Does not this proposal blot out the line between the Bible and other books? Is not this the open door to Modernism?

WITNESS COMMITTEE

Millvale, Pittsburgh, Pa.