

# Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanters.

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## MINUTES OF THE SYNOD OF THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, U. S. A.

### SESSION LVIII.

NEWBURGH, NEW YORK,  
Wednesday, June 1, 1887. }

The Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church met pursuant to adjournment in the Second R. P. Church, Newburgh, at 2 P. M., and, in the absence of the retiring moderator through severe indisposition, was constituted with prayer by David McKee, the last moderator.

The roll was called, and being made up, it is as follows :

#### ROLL OF SYNOD.

##### ILLINOIS PRESBYTERY.

CONGREGATIONS.	MINISTERS.	ELDERS.
Bethel,	D. S. Faris,	
Bloomington,		J. B. Faris.
Princeton,	D. C. Martin,	
Elkhorn,	D. G. Thompson,	Francis Torrens.
Old Bethel,	P. P. Boyd,	
Church Hill,	John Teaz,	
St. Louis,	} E. M. Smith,*	
Staunton,	G. M. Elliott,	J. H. Pickens.
Selma,	H. W. Reed.	

##### PHILADELPHIA PRESBYTERY.

CONGREGATIONS.	MINISTERS.	ELDERS.
1st Philadelphia,	T. P. Stevenson,	Wm. McKnight.
2nd Philadelphia,	J. K. McClurkin,	J. B. Stewart.
3rd Philadelphia,	R. C. Montgomery,	A. J. H. Mackie.
Baltimore,	W. M. Glasgow,	
	Joshua Kennedy.	

\* Ordained since last meeting.

*Report of Committee on Psalmody.*

Those who pray with the Saviour that Christians may all be one are sad at the present state of the church, so divided in doctrine that all can not "speak the same thing," and in worship that they cannot even sing the same songs of praise. Much of this evil comes from putting human feeling in place of divine appointment. It is proper that Christian feeling should express itself in devotional poetry, and that such poetry should be read and sung by either individuals or companies, but in the formal worship of God we may neither take from nor add to what he has appointed.

When the principle of pleasing the taste by human inventions in worship is once admitted, other corruptions will soon follow. Corruption of the worship of God tends to produce corrupt doctrine, and in the end to make man's will instead of God's the standard of our conduct. Though the principal argument for the use of uninspired hymns is the supposed lack of Christ in the Psalms, yet churches, otherwise orthodox, have adopted hymns written by those who did not believe in the divinity of Christ, and in some instances even by those who could scarcely be said to believe in Christ in any sense. It is a sad state of things when the majority of professing Christians are using human instead of divine hymns in the worship of God. There is need of reformation in the churches in this matter, and it becomes those who occupy the place of witnesses for Christ to try to bring about such reformation by a faithful testimony.

All genuine reforms must go hand in hand, as they must all be based on the Word of God and proceed from a spirit of obedience to his authority. Each one helps to encourage and support the rest. We who are so much interested in national reform ought therefore to take the same interest in the reformation of the churches. If the churches were in the habit of singing the psalms of the Bible intelligently, how could there be any opposition among Christians to the doctrine of Christ's headship over the nations?

To effect a reformation in this matter, we need to get more deeply interested ourselves in the Psalms as the matter of praise. It is an encouraging sign of the times that a paper is published to advocate the cause of the Psalms, and though this organ has, perhaps partly through our fault, been permitted to fail for a time, that the falling standard has been grasped by another hand. The friends of Bible Psalmody should see that the standard bearer is henceforth encouraged and supported. Our people, and especially the young, should be encouraged to read such literature as will educate them in the right principle, and pastors should try to secure such reading for their congregations.

Again, we ought to try to find the best way to recommend the use of the Psalms to others, and to remove stumbling-blocks which hinder the adoption of the Psalms as the matter of praise in all the churches. One of these stumbling-blocks is found in the imperfections of the version of the Psalms which we use. Another that is no less dangerous arises from the multiplying of versions which by dividing the friends of the Psalms weakens the force of their testimony, and also encourages denominationism, the unity of the churches requires that the matter of praise in the public worship of all churches should be the same. As there is one Bible common to the different churches, so there ought to be one Psalm

book which would be a basis for union in the praise of God; and this would greatly tend to bring about that union in doctrine and work, and that organic unity for which our common Saviour intercedes with the Father. If the prose version of the Psalms were set to music such as could be readily learned by the people, it might prove the first step towards this desirable end. The fact that the Episcopal church does, to some extent, chant the Psalms in their public worship, seems to warrant the hope that the practice might become general in all the churches, if a wise effort were made towards this end. Or, if a really good metrical version could be furnished which would be in no sense denominational, it would afford a more encouraging prospect of union among all Christians in the matter of praise. A version, to be really good, should contain nothing more or less than the original, and should be expressed in language at once smooth and elegant. Such a version does not yet exist.

The church is imperatively bound to attempt the preparation of a better version; for equally with individuals she is subject to the command, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." She also has the special promise of the Spirit in endeavoring to perfect her worship, and the assurance, "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted of a man according to what he hath." In the matter of Psalmody we attain perfection in obeying the divine command, "Praise God in the words of David and of Asaph the seer." Our old metrical version is justly venerated for its faithfulness to the sentiment and language of the original; but it is confessedly imperfect, and we ought to avail ourselves of the labors of Christian scholars and poets in removing its blemishes.

Among the many emendations of the metrical version of the Psalms, your committee prefer that of the Irish Presbyterian Assembly. It makes some unnecessary changes and fails to make some that are necessary, but it greatly improves the old version, both in its translations and rhythm, and adds some new metres that are excellent in their fidelity to the original and in their poetic diction. With the needed changes, that can readily be made, it will be an admirable book for our service of praise.

Your committee therefore recommend:

1. That Revs. D. McAllister, R. M. Sommerville, T. P. Stevenson, and J. C. K. Milligan, with elders Wm. Neely, W. T. Miller, and H. O'Neill, be appointed a committee to make the necessary revision of the Psalm book, and that as early as possible they set their emendations before the church to be examined for adoption at next Synod; and also to prepare a suitable collection of tunes for publication with it, and some additional metres.

2. That the committee be directed to co-operate with similar committees from other bodies in the endeavor to provide a metrical version which shall be free from objections, and shall be the manual of praise for all the churches.

3. That our people be urged to learn to chant the Psalms in prose and to use these in social and public worship when practicable.

4. That our ministers and people in their intercourse with those who use uninspired hymns be careful to bear an unobtrusive, but at the same time, a faithful and practical testimony against this corruption of the worship of God and in favor of the inspired Psalms.

5. That the Psalm-Singer, now published by the Rev. George Warrington, of Birmingham, Iowa, be recommended to the liberal patronage and support of all our people, and that pastors be urged to seek its introduction as far as possible into all our families.

ISAIAH FARIS,	} Committee.
J. C. K. MILLIGAN,	
E. G. ELSEY,	
H. O'NEILL,	
W. T. MILLER,	

The report of the Delegation to the Conference on Psalmody, held October 15, 1886, at Glasgow, was accepted, and the appointment of delegates to the Conference of 1888 was laid over till next meeting of Synod.

### *The Psalmody Conference.*

The committee appointed to attend the "Conference on Psalmody," to be held on the 15th of October, at Kampen, Holland, failed to be present at the proposed meeting. We learn, however, that the place of meeting was changed to Glasgow, Scotland, where a conference was held composed of delegates from churches in Britain. Letters and papers were received from delegates in Ireland and America that were not present. Two meetings were held, and as a basis of organization, the following was adopted and ordered to be reported to the several churches interested in the object of the conference :

1. That an association be formed and be designated "The Psalmody Alliance."

2. That the objects of this alliance shall be to sustain and promote the exclusive use of the Psalms in the service of God.

3. That the membership of said alliance shall consist of all delegates nominated by the churches that are exclusively Psalm-singing, and by all associations formed in connection with other churches that fully approve of the objects of the alliance.

4. That the alliance executive shall have power to invite, as associates, such ministers and other office-bearers of Presbyterian churches as are known to them to be in full sympathy with the aims and work of the alliance.

A committee was appointed to secure the consent of the Psalm-singing churches and Psalmody associations to the above proposals, to request the nomination of delegates, and to make arrangements for the first general meeting of the Psalmody Alliance, within two years from the present time. The committee is composed of Revs. R. F. Bradley, G. Laverty, J. Sturrock, I. Thompson, S. Patten, Mr. Gailey, J. R. Thompson and J. Kerr,—Revs. R. F. Bradley and J. Kerr, joint-secretaries.

J. R. THOMPSON,	} Of the Committee.
A. J. MCFARLAND,	

The Committee on Travelling Fund reported. The report was amended and adopted, and is as follows :