

Copied by Mark Koller 08/12/10 from pages 267-270 of
The Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter, Jan 1891, Vol XXIX, No. 1.
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**MINUTES OF THE SYNOD OF
THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
U. S. A.**

SESSION LXII

Eighth Street Reformed Presbyterian Church,
The Synod
Pittsburgh, Pa. of the Reformed

Wednesday, May 27, 1891. Presbyterian Church of North America, met, according to adjournment, in the Eighth Street Reformed Presbyterian church, Pittsburgh, Pa.,

Wednesday, May 27, 1891, at 10..30 A. M., and was called to order by the Moderator, Rev. D. H. Coulter, and constituted with prayer.

Report of Committee on Psalmody.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church maintains the doctrine, that "The Book of Psalms, which are of divine inspiration, is well adapted to the state of the church and of every member, in all ages and circumstances ; and these Psalms, to the exclusion of all imitations and uninspired compositions, are to be used in social worship."

The principle on which Protestants regulate worship is that " the second commandment requires the receiving, observing and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God has appointed in his Word "and that it forbids " The worship of God by any way not appointed in his Word." This principle being accepted by Evangelical Christendom, the question as to Psalmody is: Did God appoint the Book of Psalms for his worship, and is there a similar appointment of uninspired hymns? M'Clintock and Strong's Cyclopaedia represents evangelical Christian sentiment when it says, vol. viii, p. T51: "The inspiration and canonical authority of the Psalms are established by the most abundant and convincing evidence. They never were, and never can be rejected, except by impious impugners of all divine revelation. Not to mention other ancient testimonies, we find complete evidence in the New Testament, where the book is quoted or referred to as divine by Christ and his apostles at least 70 times."

The only question therefore that we need here to discuss is the divine appointment of the Psalms for use in social worship. Psalmody in religious worship was only

occasionally employed till the time of David and Solomon; therefore we are to look to that period for the divine appointment. That David was an inspired prophet we know:

1st. By his own claim, 2 Sam. xxiii: 1, 2 : "The sweet Psalmist of Israel said, the Spirit of the Lord spake by me and His Word was in my tongue."

2nd. By the technical title of a prophet, "Man of God," given him, 2 Chron. viii: 14 and Nehemiah xii: 24-36.

3d. The Apostle Peter, Acts i: 16 and ii: 30, quotes his Psalms as given by the Holy Ghost, and calls him "a Prophet." Also, 2 Sam. xxiv: 19 and 2 Chron. xxix: 25, expressly say that "Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet" co-operated with him in regulating God's worship, thus giving it the sanction of all the Prophets.

Also, we are definitely told, 1 Chron. xxviii: 11-19, that "David gave to Solomon all the pattern that he had by the spirit; "that he assured him that" all this the Lord made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern." That the pattern included the song service is specifically declared, 1 Chron. vi: 31-32: "These are they whom David set over the service of song in the House of the Lord, after that the ark had rest and they ministered before the dwelling place of the tabernacle of the congregation with singing, until Solomon had built the House of the Lord in Jerusalem, and then they waited on their office according to their order." Again, 1 Chron. xvi: 4-7, David "appointed certain of the Levites to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel. Then on that day David delivered first this Psalm to thank the Lord into the hand of Asaph and his brethren. "Still farther, 1 Chron. xxv: 1-7, gives David's arrangement of those who "prophesied with the harp to give thanks and to praise the Lord," and of those who were instructed in the songs of the Lord, "probably the singers and inspired composers of Psalms." Solomon's part in this is found in 2 Chron. v: 12-13 and vii: 6 and viii: 14, and it seems to have been only "he carrying out of what David, the man of God, had commanded."

Thus we have explicit testimony to the inspiration of the Psalms and to their formal appointment by David and Solomon for the praise of God. That this appointment was divine and permanent in the social worship of God is as clearly declared. The Psalter is directly referred to in 1 Chron. xxv. 5-7, as then containing the songs of David, Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun. It was completed at a later date, but these songs constitute a large part of the Psalter as it now is. Over two hundred years later the Psalter was explicitly prescribed for the temple service of Song, II. Chron. xxix: 30: "Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped." This was not merely a royal edict of good king Hezekiah; for we are told that all his reform work was "according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet; for so was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets," II. Chron. xxix: 15, 25, and xxxi: 20, 21.

Again, this was not a mere exceptional service; for it is added, II. Chron. xxix: 35, "So the service of the house of the Lord Was Set in order." This phrase means to set up firmly, to establish. Canon Rawlinson says in his Commentary : "What the prophets ordered, they ordered as inspired of God. Hence, their commands were binding, not only in David's time, but in Hezekiah's also." King Josiah, a century later, recognizes this as

the divinely established order of worship, II. Chron. xxxv : 4, 15, 26; for then "the singers, the sons of Asaph, were in their places according to the commandments of David, and Asaph, and Heman, and Jeduthun, the king's seer." And it is added that his reform work was "according to the writing of David, king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon his son, . . . and according to that which was written in the law of the Lord."

Ezra, or his contemporaries, is supposed to have completed the Psalter; and he records the fact of its use in the temple worship as restored after the Babylonian captivity, Ezra iii: 10, 11: "And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals to praise the Lord after the ordinance of David king of Israel, and they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord, because he is good, for his mercy endureth forever toward Israel." Nehemiah x: 39; xii: 24-27. and xiii, shows that when the rebuilt walls of Jerusalem were dedicated, the Psalms were used as divinely appointed; for they gave "praise and thanks according to the command of David the man of God; . . . The singers sang loud; . . . and both the porters and the singers kept the word of their God according to the commandment of David and of Solomon his son, for in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving to God." Also, the singers joined in the covenant, "we will not forsake the house of our God; "and a permanent place and portions were provided for them "in the chambers of the house of God."

This leaves no doubt of the divinely appointed use of the Psalms in the Old Testament dispensation, but it is universally admitted that the New Testament gives no hint that Christ or his apostles in any way superseded their use, or changed this divine appointment. It is also admitted that Christ used the Psalms as speaking of him and as part of his fulfillment of the law, and that the hymn he sang after the institution of the Lord's Supper was the Hallel, Psalms 113, 118. Christian scholars farther agree that Christ and his apostles, while requiring a service of song, provided no other songs for Christian use and approved the use of the inspired Psalter under the designation, "Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs," I. Cor. xiv: 26; Eph. v: 19; Col. iii: 16 ; and James v: 13; and also that modern hymns have neither inspiration nor divine appointment.

M'Clintock & Strong Cyclopaedia, vol. viii, 737, says, "The early Christians used the Jewish Psalms in their worship, which would almost certainly be sung to their traditional temple music. G. B. Martini says, "This is the Hebrew chant of the psalmodies which ever since the time of David and Solomon has been transmitted from one generation to another, and therefore goes beyond the first half of the first age of the Church. Is it not then sufficient to convince us that the apostles, who were born Hebrews, brought up in the customs of their nation, wont to frequent the temple and engage in the prayers and divine praises therein recited, should retain the same method and use the same chants with which the people used to respond to the Levitical choir? Thus, while the destruction of the temple and the dispersion of the Jews suspended Jewish worship, the singing of the Psalms and the traditions of their melodies would be preserved in the Christian Church.

They also give strong and extended testimony to the adaptation of the Psalms to Christian use; they say, p. 752: "In every age of the Church, the Psalms have been extolled for their excellence and their use for godly edifying. Indeed, if Paul's estimate of ancient inspired scripture, 2 Tim. iii: 15-17, can be justly applied to any single book, that book must be the Psalms. Even in the New Testament there is scarcely a work of equal practical utility. . . Among the early Christians it was customary to learn the book by heart, that Psalmody might enliven their social hours and soften the fatigues and sooth the sorrows of life. They employed the Psalms, not only in their religious assemblies, of which use we find probable mention in 1 Cor. xiv: 26, but also at their meals and before retiring to rest, as Clement of Alexandria, testifies. This authority also accounts for the omission from the Psalter of several inspired songs in this way: "The truth seems to be as Ewald and Tuoluck maintain, that the collection was made, not so much with reference to the beauty of the pieces, as to their adaptation for devotional use in public worship."

When the great evangelical Christian scholars thus testify to the divine appointment and inspired adaptation of the Psalms to Christian worship, it is no time for us to lower our testimony nor to change our practice of using them exclusively in the social worship of God. No more than with other uninspired writings would we interfere with the devotional use of uninspired hymns, whether sung, or read, or spoken for our own comfort, or for the instruction and quickening of others. But we recommend,

1st. That Synod emphatically renew its testimony to the Psalms as the only inspired and divinely appointed manual of the Church's praise in all ages and places of the world.

2d. That Synod enjoin all those under its care to obey the divine command, and in all the acts of social worship to "praise God in the words of David and Asaph the seer."

3d. That Synod renew its testimony in behalf of the revised version of the Psalter, as being more accurate and close to the original and less cumbered with human additions and uninspired paraphrases than the old Scotch version or any other extant.

4th. That it is most desirable to have uniformity in the service of praise; that cannot be had without the use of a common book; we, therefore, ask Synod to appoint a committee to bring this matter before all the evangelical bodies, and seek to have a Psalter prepared that shall be used by all of them in common.

5th. That the singing of Psalms be recommended as a more prominent part of the exercises of worship in the family, in the social meeting, and in the public sanctuary.

Committee:

J. C. K. Milligan,
T. A. H. Wylie,
Thomas Patton,
Robert M'Neill,
David Boyd,