

THE
EVANGELICAL GUARDIAN,

VOL. II

JULY, 1844.

No 2

MINUTES

OF THE

FOURTH GENERAL SYNOD

OF THE

Associate Reformed Church of the West.

Held at Hamilton, Ohio, May 22d. 1844.

The General Synod of the Associate Reformed Church met in Hamilton according to adjournment and was opened with a sermon by the last Moderator, Rev. Alex. Sharpe, from 1 Tim. 3, 15. "That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

At half past 2 o'clock P. M., Synod was constituted with prayer. The following ministers and Elders presented certificates that they had been appointed delegates to this General Synod by their respective Presbyteries.

1st Presbytery of Ohio.

Ministers.

Rev. David Macdill,
" Samuel W. McCracken
" James Prestley,

Elders.

Hon. Jeremiah Morrow,
Mr. Robert Caldwell,*
" John Morrow.

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We conclude by informing our readers that if they have any difficulties on this subject which we have not yet reconciled, we will be happy to use our endeavors to do so, if they will only call upon us through the columns of the Christian Intelligencer, which, we are sure the excellent editor will cheerfully throw open for that purpose.

MACEDON.

[From the Charleston Observer.]

LETTER II.

PSALMODY—THE QUESTION.

My Christian Friends,---In my first Letter I considered the first negative particular of "Charlestoniensis," and it is hoped it was made sufficiently obvious that what my brother says in that particular is *not* the question, *is* the question, in part at least, especially in a *practical* point of view. Let us now attend to his second negative particular, which is very much like the first, containing the same general idea, only it is a little more exclusive and uncharitable, and when about to close this particular, he appears to have missed his ink-stand, and dipped his pen into a vinegar cruet. I infer as much from the fact that he speaks of his opponents as "very uncandid and dishonest," because they do not confine the dispute on Psalmody to the Presbyterian Church exclusively; but oppose themselves to all who are opposed to the use of David's Psalms. But let us not detain to find fault with the above *delicate* epithets. With some people, in such discussions, they come in as a matter of course, and often, as in the present case, are entirely uncalled for.

In the particular now under review, Mr. C. seems especially anxious to confine the question as to what is right for Presbyterians to do in the matter of Psalmody. He says, "the question is not, is it right for Arians, Socinians, Universalists, &c., to sing hymns adapted to express their unscriptural and erroneous opinions, but whether it is right for Presbyterians to sing those Psalms and Hymns which the Church has authorized as orthodox, devotional, and proper." Now, be it known to Mr. C., that we have no contest with "Arians, Socinians, and Universalists," on the subject of Psalmody. Our dispute is with those denominations who, in the judgment of charity, are entitled to the name *christian*---even with those whom Mr. C.

“feels a delicacy in designating by name, but includes under the very indefinite term of “&c.”

What denominations are included under his *and so forth*? Why, certainly, all those Christian denominations (his own excepted) that adopt the hymn system. This phrase will include the Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Dutch Reformed, Congregationalists, New School and Cumberland Presbyterians. We are opposed to the course pursued by all these denominations on the subject of Psalmody; but our contest for the truth on this subject has been carried on principally with the Presbyterians, for several reasons--1. Because, instead of the Psalms themselves they have adopted Dr. Watts' imitation of them, a thing more offensive to us than the use of his hymns;--2, because Presbyterians and Seceders, entertaining the same views on Church Government, and the doctrines of religion, ought to be united, but the difference in their opinions and practices on Psalmody keeps up the schism, and hence it is the bone of contention between the two bodies. But while we would rejoice to see this middle wall of partition between us and our Presbyterian brethren broken down and destroyed, we are, at the same time, extremely anxious that the whole Christian world should adopt the inspired Psalter as the matter of their praise; and we feel assured that the Church---the whole Church---must come to this at last: for we look forward with joyous anticipations to that happy day when there will be a union, not only of Presbyterians and Seceders, but of the Church universal---of Jew and Gentile---a union not only of sentiment, but also of song, for the prediction is, (Isaiah lii. 8.) “Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; *with the voice together shall they sing*: for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord shall bring again Zion.”

And if “when the Lord shall bring again Zion,” there is to be a union of voice in the praise of God, that praise must be taken from David's Psalms. The Church can never settle down upon any other book or books as the standard of praise. The Seceders, and those who coincide with them in opinion, will maintain their ground: and presently the Jews will be restored once more to Divine favor, and will come in to back the advocates of David's Psalms, or to lead the way in defence of truth on this as well as on other subjects, with an invincible and never-dying energy---the people of God will crowd around them from every side---ten men, out of all languages of the nations, shall take hold of the skirt of the Jew, because God is with him, and God himself will lead on his band of invincibles to a glorious and everlasting triumph.

But to return to our Charleston friend. He is not disposed to take such enlarged views on the subject of Psalmody. If he can secure a hymn-book to suit himself, and his own Church, it is enough for him; others may manage the matter as best they can.---Those *and so forth* denominations alluded to above---those "heretical bodies," as he calls them, must be allowed to pursue their own course;---for he observes, we can no more hinder them from singing heresy, than from praying and preaching, and publishing, heresy. Very charitable indeed! Our friend finds certain Christian denominations guilty of offering up heretical prayers, and preaching heretical sermons, and therefore he would abandon them to "add iniquity to iniquity," and sing heretical songs of praise---for, as we cannot control them in the former, so neither can we in the latter, and all we can do in the matter is to sit down and say, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." How would the Temperance Reformation advance if the Reformers in that good work would say to the guilty inebriate---You "heretic" you are guilty of profanity and vulgarity, of idleness and other crimes, but we cannot compel you to abandon these bad habits, and therefore you must even go on and become intoxicated as much as you please---we leave you to "wax worse and worse."

Experience, however, has shewn that the best way to deal with such characters, is to prevail on them to become *sober* men, and then they are found to forsake, to some extent, their other evil habits. So, if these "heretical bodies" could be influenced to lay aside their human compositions, and adopt God's authorized book of praises, the probability is strong that they would come right in other things. Why then not admit them as parties in this discussion, and as deeply interested in its ultimate decision? But why this anxiety on the part of our opponent to confine the question as to what Presbyterians ought to sing in the praise of God? Because he knows full well that if all denominations are taken into the account, then the question will be, whether the Church should be confined to David's Psalms, or be left to "sing any thing and every thing," which these different bodies of antipodal principles do at this day employ in the praise of God? Strong as Mr. C. is in the advocacy of human compositions, instead of God's Word, he does not feel prepared, as yet, to stand up in defence of that grand assortment of hymns now in use, in which both poetry and sentiment can be found adapted to the taste and faith of the heterogeneous mass that employs them.

The question then is not, what shall the Presbyterian Church sing? No such thing; but the great question is, what ought the Catholic or

Universal Church to sing? Or, as it is the duty of *all men* to praise God---“all lands”---“from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same,” and that too in every age, and under every dispensation of grace---the question is, what ought the standard of praise for this mighty mass of immortal minds, in each and every revolving generation be? Shall it be David’s Psalms, composed by the Divine Spirit---made, designed, adapted, and appointed by him to advance his praise: or shall every petty sect and fragment of the Church, in every passing generation, presume, without Divine permission, to make or select from human compositions, their own hymns, adapted to the diversified faith of the ever-changing multitude?

This, Christian friends, is the question; and permit me now to present it in a distinct proposition---a proposition which should have headed the numbers of “Charlestoniensis,” instead of the one devised:

THE QUESTION.

Has God appointed the Psalms of David to be sung exclusively in Divine worship, in every age, and among every kindred, and people and nation, and tongue, in the best version of them that can be obtained in the different languages of the nations---or, *has God appointed* an imitation of David’s Psalms to be sung under the Gospel dispensation, in every age and country---and, in addition to this imitation, *has God authorized* the use of any one, or all the various Hymn Books, that have been, or are now in use throughout the world?

This is the *broad* question---very unlike that *narrow point* to which Mr. C. would confine us in the premises, but very soon himself forgets and departs from in the discussion. One would think that, after he had been so particular in defining the point in dispute, and contracting it so miserably, he would adhere to his position; but no such thing, he abandons it immediately. In the very first sentence of No. 3, he says, “having, in our preceding article, settled our preliminaries and distinctly laid down the question in debate between our Seceding brethren *and all other portions of the Christian Church*; we will now proceed to notice the arguments.” It is evident then, from Mr. C’s own words, that the question in debate is not one between us and Presbyterians merely, but between Seceders, and *all other portions of the Christian Church*; and if so, and if, as our brother admits, there ought to be some *standard* of praise what shall it be? The Book of God for which we contend, or all, or any one of those Hymn Books, with their contradictory sentiments, which are adopted and employed by the hymn-singing portions of the Christian Church? After all, why should Mr. C. charge us with being “very uncandid

and dishonest," because we state or discuss the question on its broad principles, as one affecting the Church universally, when he does the very same thing himself! "O consistency! thou art a jewel!"

The consideration of the *third* and *fourth* negative particulars of our Charleston friend I must defer for the present. In them he professes great love and esteem for the Psalms of David, and says, *the question is not* whether we shall reject the Psalms of David---and that "our Book of Psalmody includes a version of the Psalms of David. Our Congregations are accustomed to sing them." My friend must have presumed greatly on the ignorance, the prejudice, and the credulity of his hearers when he could have the hardihood to say, "Our Book of Psalmody includes a *version* of the Psalms of David." But I will not enter on the discussion of these particulars at present; they will come under review when the attempt is made to shew that the imitation of Dr. Watts is *no version*---that it has no claim to the title of "David's Psalms"---and that the question is, *shall we reject the Psalms of David?*

In my friend's fifth and last negative particular he observes, "the question at issue does not involve any point which is essential to salvation. It does not involve the Church standing or character of either party. It does not implicate the orthodoxy of either party." To this attempt of Mr. C. to make out himself and his friends as good as their neighbors, I must not object; it is natural for men to "compare themselves among themselves," though Paul plainly intimates that it is not very *wise*. It is not for me to say how far a man may be in error, and yet be saved, or how corrupt and heterodox a church may be and yet many of its members be admitted into the Paradise of God. While, therefore, it is very difficult, if not, impossible, for man to determine with precision what is *essential to salvation*---how much duty a Christian may omit, how much error he may embrace, and yet be saved---it is not so difficult to determine, with the Bible in our hands, the amount of error necessary to "involve the Church standing, or implicate the orthodoxy" of any denomination. If it is just as orthodox and proper to sing our own songs in Divine worship as to sing the songs of the Lord, then certainly it is very foolish, not to say sinful, in us to keep ourselves aloof and separated from our Presbyterian brethren for a mere *bagatelle*. It is very painful to our hearts, on Communion occasions, not to invite our Old School Presbyterian brethren, (from whom we are not separated as we are from the New School, Methodists, and others,) to commemorate with us, the death of Christ; and the principal reason why we keep up this sep-

aration is, because we consider our brethren heterodox, grievously heterodox, on the subject of Psalmody. In my Discourse, it was observed, that the use of David's Psalms was not essential to salvation, but *essential to praise*. After attempting to prove that these Psalms are to be used exclusively in Divine worship, I exhorted, or argued, that our brethren should abandon the use of human compositions, inasmuch as such worship cannot be offered in faith, and without faith it is impossible to please God. From this Mr. C. infers that, in the premises, I admit that the use of David's Psalms is *not* essential to salvation, and in the conclusion contend that it is. But surely the inference is not fair; if it is fair, then on what ground does he congratulate himself and friends that "the question at issue does not involve the Church standing, or implicate the orthodoxy of either party?"

No favorable inference can be drawn from the writings of one who is represented as denying on one page an opinion or principle for which he had "sought credit" on a former. Mr. C's "&c." denominations are, as he intimates, heretical in praying, in preaching, and in praise, yet he might charitably hope that many of them will be saved. And if he could hope for the salvation of those who are guilty of *three* heresies, we surely may be permitted, without the charge of contradiction, to cherish the hope that those who are chargeable with but *one* of those errors, if they are correct in other things will be admitted into the blissful Paradise.

All that it is thought necessary to say at present touching the negative particulars of our Charleston friend has been advanced, and enough has been said to shew on what a wretched foundation he has been building for several months. He charges me with building on a *rotten foundation*, (No. 5,) but what sort of a quaggy, quicksand foundation, have we here? Bad as it is, however he has ventured to erect on it, for himself and his friends, *one story* of a showy edifice. We hope to see it sink, or topple down, by and by.

The affirmative particulars of my friend will be noticed in due time. The substance of what he says in these particulars is condensed and embodied in the proposition which heads his numbers. The first part of this proposition, viz. "Has God, by Divine appointment, confined his Church to the exclusive use of the Psalms of David in his worship," he has labored hard to disprove. In this attempt he has certainly made a signal failure, exposing at the same time the weakness of his own cause, and adding validity to that which he opposes. It is a pity my friend happens to be on the wrong side of this controversy. With the talent and learning he possesses, what could he not do, by

sound, and solid, and Scriptural arguments, in defending the cause of truth? But now, he is vainly attempting, by sophistry and assertion, and the "tradition of the Elders," or Fathers, to prop up a sinking cause---a cause which never should have had an origin of an advocate. A bad business truly. But, Christian friends, wishing you a cheerful Christmas, and a happy New Year, I remain,

Yours, &c.

W. R. H.

Lindo, Abbeville, S. C. Dec. 29, 1842.

ECCLESIASTICAL.

The First Presbytery of Ohio met at Hamilton on the 21st day of May ult. Mr. Mitchel Brown was after the usual trials licensed to preach the Gospel as a probationer for the holy ministry. The following appointments were made: Oxford, D. Macdill 1st Sab. June; John M. Graham 2d do; James Barnett 4 do; J. Reynolds 5 do. Fairhaven, S. W. McCracken 4 Sab. June; J. Reynolds 2 Sab. July; D. Macdill 1st Sab. August; W. M. Boyse 4th do.

Messrs. Boyse and McCracken to administer the Lord's Supper at Eaton.

A special meeting of the Presbytery is to be held at Oxford on Tuesday the 23d day of July at 10 o'clock A. M., for the purpose of ordaining Mr. Barnett as a missionary to Palestine, and to transact any other business which may be found necessary.

XENIA, May 20th, 1844.

MR. EDITOR:

I have been directed by the Presbytery of Springfield to forward the following report to you, and request you to publish it in the Evangelical Guardian.

JAMES R. BONNER, Clerk.

The Associate Reformed Presbytery of Springfield, to the vacancies and congregations under our care, send greeting---

*Dear Brethren:--*We would earnestly and affectionately address you on the duty and privilege of holding *prayer meetings, or meetings for social worship*, in your different districts, wherever it is practicable, at least as often as once a week.

The subject has been too long and too generally neglected: and, although it has been urged upon us by our Synod---see minutes of 1836---it has been lamentably overlooked and unheeded. And why is this? Are we not bound to give to the directions and exhortations of those appointed over us by the head of the Church a candid and impartial hearing, and to obey them in the Lord? On this subject consult 1st Thess. 5: 12, 13. and Heb. 13: 17.

Social prayer-meetings is a scriptural duty, for which we have precept, example, and promise.