

THE
RELIGIOUS MONITOR,
AND
EVANGELICAL REPOSITORY.

NOVEMBER, 1838.

ART. I. *Exposition of Romans viii. 18—23.*

“For I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected *the same* in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now: and not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.” Rom. viii. 18—23.

From the first verse of this chapter to the verse commencing our text, the Apostle points out the strong consolation which the justified in Christ Jesus possess through his blood. Against remaining corruption, he comforts them in the first part of the chapter. Sin shall not have dominion over them. United to Jesus, they are secure from condemnation. The body must die because of sin; yet its death will be but a preparation for putting it in possession of a better life. “If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.” Believers are all the children of God; yea, they are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. If a child of God, what need you fear? If an heir of God, what can you want? If Omnipotence is your shield, what enemy can touch you? If Jesus is your Advocate, and by the merit of His death pleads for you perpetually before the throne, why need you dread that remaining corruption will prove your ruin? Well might the Apostle in holy triumph exclaim:—“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”

An objection to his reasoning the Apostle proceeds to notice in the 17th verse, which may be termed the commencement of the second part of his argument. He had comforted believers in the former verses under the burden of remaining sin. From the 18th to the 31st verse he

However much we feel on account of your late decision, we wish to do nothing rashly. By future explanations we hope our difficulties may be removed. We are willing to consider that our connexion with you still exists as formerly, till we hear from you again. And it is, dear brethren, our earnest prayer, that the great Head of the Church may be present with you and with us in all our deliberations, leading us to such measures as shall be for his glory, the advancement of the cause of truth and righteousness in the world, and the peace and prosperity of our Zion.

Signed, in name and by appointment of the Synod,

JAMES MEEK, *Moderator.*

ROBERT SHAW, *Syn. Clerk.*

ART. V. *Proceedings of the Associate Reformed Synod of New York.*

From the published minutes of the late meeting of this Judicatory, we make the extracts given below. We are not aware that our readers will be at all surprised at this Synod's decision on the subject of Psalmody.-- At their meeting in 1837 certain Resolutions were offered, directing the ministers of said Synod either to use the Scripture Psalms or to omit singing in public worship, when they officiated in the churches of other denominations. These Resolutions were referred to a committee of which Dr. M'Carroll, their professor of Theology, was chairman. The Dr's Report on the subject involved in those Resolutions was adopted by the Synod in preference to the more scriptural Report of Mr. Blakie of the minority of said committee. The Synod, by the adoption of Dr. M'Carroll's Report, have confirmed the views which our church have always entertained on that part of the constitution of the Associate Reformed Church which treats of the subject of Psalmody.— We have always contended that that Constitution allowed the Associate Reformed people to sing what Psalms or Hymns they pleased in their families and while worshipping in other denominations, provided they used the Scripture Psalms in the Associate Reformed CHURCHES. But these views have been characterized as *strained* if not *calumnious*. The Associate Reformed Synod of New York, however, have now judicially confirmed their correctness. Our readers will at once perceive that there is no truth in the reference of Dr. M'Carroll to the "Testimony of the Associate Church." Our Testimony *does not* contain the sentiment imputed to it. We cannot understand what the Dr. means, unless it be to practice a deception on his brethren and the christian public. From some of the doctrinal positions taken by the Dr. in his Report, we entirely dissent; but we have not time to particularize. The sum total, therefore, of the Synod's decision is, that their ministers and people may

sing what Psalms they please, if they only adhere to the Scripture Psalms in their CHURCHES; that is to say, that the inspired Psalms may or may not be used in the worship of God throughout the churches of Christ, according as circumstances dictate.

Decision on the subject of Psalmody.

The subject of Psalmody was called up. A paper was received from Dr. M'Carroll, the chairman of the committee, on the subject, which was read as follows:

The committee to whom was referred the preamble and resolution, respecting the Psalmody to be used by our ministers when officiating in the churches of other denominations, respectfully report:

That after an attentive consideration of the subject committed to them, they are of opinion that it would be unnecessary and improper to pass the resolution proposed, for the following considerations: In the existing state of our ecclesiastical laws and regulations, we have for several years been enjoying a very large share of prosperity, and evident tokens of the blessing of the King of Zion. No new regulations seem to be called for, to improve a condition for which we have been, annually, and for many years, giving public thanks to God. While other denominations, on the right hand and on the left, have been "biting and devouring one another," we have been placed by a kind Providence in a happy mean between the extremes of latitudinarianism on the one hand, and excessive strictness on the other. We tried one of these extremes, and, after much loss, barely escaped with our lives. We have tried the middle way, and thus far found it safe and prosperous. Having escaped Scylla, let us not rush into Charybdis.

The passing of this resolution, would endanger the harmony and even the entireness of this Synod. Those who could not in conscience obey it, must either remove from our communion, or, by resisting authority, expose themselves to the hardship of expulsion. Small and weak as our denomination is, it would be injudicious to peril our very existence on an untried experiment.

The resolution in question is, in the form of it, an addition to the obligations which our ministers have voluntarily assumed at their ordination. It cannot, therefore, be imposed on them without their consent, nor become a part of the standing law of the church, without passing through the process required for altering the constitution. It is expressly provided that "no regulations intended to be universal and permanent shall be established, without previously transmitting them to the several Presbyteries, that they may have time to consider and report their judgment thereon." It would be unconstitutional for this Synod to assume the power of legislating for the ministers and church, and therefore not only uncalled for, but wrong.

Nor would it be proper to move the church, for the purpose of adding this resolution in a regular manner to our constitution. Our Confession is already sufficiently large. To its principles our ministers are all cordially attached, as they freely professed. It is intended to be the municipal law of our own denomination, and is derived from the Holy Scriptures. But it does not enter particularly into the subject of our foreign relations or inter-ecclesiastical law. This delicate and difficult subject it has wisely left to the consciences of the one family of God, enlightened by his own word, only directing that the "communion of saints, as God

offereth opportunity, is to be extended to all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus." If, then, there be any thing wrong on this subject, (Ch. 26, Sec. 2,) it had better be corrected by an enlightened public sentiment and personal intercourse, in kind and christian fellowship, than by the authority of this Synod, or even of all the co-ordinate legislative powers of the church.

Our Lord recognized a distinction between the moral and municipal law, when in relation to divorces, he says, "For the hardness of your hearts he wrote you this precept, but from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female." Mark x. 4. Laws administered by men must of necessity be less extensive than the whole of human duty; so that something beyond all law, civil and ecclesiastical, must be left to conscience and to God, for the obvious reason, that to enforce the whole moral law is impossible, and the attempt would do more harm than good. The case before us is one which may safely be left where it has hitherto been by the best and wisest men, out of the code ecclesiastical.

There is nothing to hinder any, who may be so disposed, from following the course proposed in this resolution, so that no injury will be done to any member if the Synod should refuse to pass it into a law, unless it be considered that it is already the law of the church, in which case the passing of it again were superfluous.

This subject affords a proper occasion for the exercise of the Christian grace of forbearance. And happily, it is almost the only one which calls for the exercise of that grace. Having so many reasons for thankfulness, in the present uniformity of sentiment on the whole system of revealed truth, both as relates to doctrine and to practice, it would argue a great deficiency of gracious attainment, in the members of this Synod, if they cannot allow to each other a liberty of conscience on a subject that has so little to do with either ministerial usefulness and comfort, or the general prosperity of religion. The scheme of absolute uniformity is impracticable, even in the smallest societies, and whenever enforced, necessarily issues in division after division; and, in the ruin of practical godliness, the abandonment of all the great objects to which the united strength of the whole church is devoted by her Divine Master, and the indulgence of every hateful passion, illustrates the philosophical paradox of divisibility, ad infinitum. The Holy Scriptures are full of warnings on this subject. "The beginning of strife is like the letting out of water. Therefore let contention alone before it be meddled with." "For if ye bite and devour one another, take heed lest ye also be consumed one of another."

Here, the committee are of opinion, this subject might rest, regarding the resolution before them as an addition to existing laws: but as it may possibly be regarded by some as a mere explanation of the constitution as it already exists, it will be considered in that view. Even on the supposition that the resolution was meant to be, what does not appear, an explanation and enforcement of the existing law of the church, it ought not to be passed, inasmuch as the constitution cannot be explained on subjects of which it does not treat. The rule on psalmody is expressly confined to Associate Reformed churches. "Nor shall any compositions merely human be sung in any of the Associate Reformed churches."—(Const. B. 3, C. 3. Sec. 3.) That limitation means something: and it does not appear what it can be, unless that the rule laid down is binding only in Associate Reformed churches, or that, in relation to all other churches, the constitution says nothing. This view is confirmed by the overture prepared by Dr. Mason, the father of the late Professor, Robert

Annan and John Smith, the fathers of our church, and which was published and distributed among the churches by order of Synod, in 1787, and in which there is an express disclaimer of the condemnation in all cases of any thing but our own practice: "We could wish for a more finished poetical version of these (the Psalms of David, and other songs of Scripture) than any yet given to the churches. And we do not say that hymns of human composition may not be lawfully used in any case whatsoever. But we think it safest generally to adhere to the scriptural Psalmody." (Ch. 21, p. 98.)

The testimony of the Associate church allows of other inspired songs taken both from the Old Testament and the New, neither of which would accord with the resolution in question. (Test. p. 170.) Another overture published by our Synod in 1796, takes the same grounds. Neither the language of the constitution, nor collateral testimonies, nor the practice of the church would authorise this first attempt to establish a rule to operate out of our own church, and impose stricter terms than are imposed at home. It is said that the doctrine of the Confession, respecting the Psalms to be used in the worship of God, if true in Associate Reformed, is true in all churches, and vice versa. This is admitted: and what then? The Confession says nothing about the particular version: It lays down the principle which is to be carried out, in the best manner that circumstances will allow at home and abroad. And the most strenuous advocates of the resolution will not assert that there are no Psalms in the books used by other churches which could be used in accordance with that part of our Confession, or that our Confession pronounces it absolutely sinful to use any part of any version but our own. Upon the whole subject, the committee recommend for the adoption of Synod the following resolutions: 1st. That every member of this Synod be enjoined to study the things that make for peace, and the things whereby one may edify another, and be much in prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of wisdom and love upon themselves and the churches. 2d. That the principles adopted by this church be adhered to, and be carried out when ministering in other churches, in a manner as nearly resembling our own as the circumstances will allow.

JOSEPH M'CARROLL, Chairman.

Also a paper, on the same subject by the Rev. Mr. Blakie, a member of the committee, was read as follows:

The minority of the committee to whom was referred the preamble and resolutions, directing our ministers either to use our own Psalms or omit singing in public worship, when they officiate in the churches of other denominations, is constrained to differ from the other member of your committee on the subject, and conscientiously believes it to be his duty to present a few reasons why this resolution, or one of similar import, should be sustained.

I do not consider it at all necessary to propose this as an amendment to our constitution, nor particularly to view it in this light; but as it is opposed also, "*as an explanation and enforcement of the existing law.*" I now proceed to offer a few considerations why, in this light, this, or a resolution of a similar nature, should be passed.

Here it is objected that the existing law does not treat on this subject at all. To this I answer, that both in the Confession of Faith, (Chap. 21, sec. 1 and 5,) on the article of religious worship, set forth that "the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his revealed will that he may not be worshipped according

to the imaginations and devices of men," and then they say, that a part of this religious worship, thus prescribed and appointed, is the worshipping of God, by "singing of psalms with grace in the heart." When this chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith was written, the modern hymns and spiritual songs of the 18th and 19th centuries were unknown, while with the Psalms given by inspiration of God, the church was familiar, and to them only the allusion is here made in our standards.

Those also who arranged our "directory for public worship," have entertained the same views on this subject. In the most unequivocal manner they declare, that "it is the will of God, that the sacred songs contained in the Book of Psalms be sung in his worship, both public and private, to the end of the world."

Plain and conclusive as this part of our directory may appear, yet it is supposed to be at least limited, if not counteracted and destroyed, by a subsequent declaration that "nothing merely human shall be sung in any of the Associate Reformed churches." This is considered as only binding on Associate Reformed churches, and that, in relation to all other churches, the constitution says nothing. I admit, for the sake of argument, that it is only binding by our authority on Associate Reformed churches, yet if it be the will of God that the sacred songs contained in the Book of Psalms be sung in his worship, both public and private to the end of the world, where, I would ask, can our ministers go, and into what church can they enter, where it is the will of God that the sacred songs contained in the Book of Psalms *should not* be the matter of his praise? Go into whatever church they please, and lift any human substitute, still it will be found that according to our directory for worship, they are not worshipping God at all. If there be truth in this part of our directory for worship, "It is the will, &c." it is a moral precept that in worshipping God, either in our own churches or others, we must use only the sacred songs contained in the Book of Psalms; and so far from viewing it as a tacit permission to sing what we please elsewhere, when compositions merely human are forbidden in our own church, there is only a doubling of diligence in pointing out the path of duty to the sentinels upon our walls and the sentry at our gates. If these sacred songs must be sung in the worship of God, both public and private, or in other words, at all times and in all places, where is the opportunity, without violating this part of our directory, to sing any thing else?

And to this, as well as the other parts of our directory for worship, in their vows at ordination, the ministers of the Associate Reformed church, *ex animo*, give their solemn approval, and resolve to maintain and observe it accordingly. That they should therefore be constrained to use only our own Psalmody, or omit singing altogether in other churches, cannot (in my humble opinion) appear unreasonable.

A great objection is also taken as to what version we should employ. Consistency replies, use that and that only, which conveys the idea of the Divine original most faithfully, the version authorised for use in our own church, until a more faithful one can be obtained. As I believe it cannot be shown that any other songs of praise but the sacred songs contained in the book of Psalms have been sung with acceptance before God on earth, from the period that our Saviour entered on his ministry, till the canon of Divine revelation was closed, or in other words, by the Saviour and his inspired Apostles, and, as in connexion with this, the only legacy, as matter of praise, left to the church by her living head, are the Psalms, which (not less than either Mo-

ses or the Prophets,) testify of him, and "as the rich variety and perfect purity of their matter, the blessing of God upon them in every age, and the edification of the church thence arising, set the propriety of singing them in a convincing light," so it is (in my humble opinion) the duty of our ministers to praise God, not indeed "in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."

To some, however, it may appear to be a great invasion of present custom, either to ask to sing our own Psalms, or to omit singing where they cannot be used: and just in proportion to this alienation of regard for the *only spiritual songs*, is the necessity of passing this resolution.

Not a few would imagine that this was equivalent to saying that such churches were not christian; but this is a mere fallacy. What minister in our connexion when officiating in an Episcopal church, would read their Liturgy and their prayers; and which of us would pretend to say, that because we do not worship with their selections, we deny that they are christians? There is probably much more scriptural truth in their Litany, Liturgy and prayers, than in the average of all, or even the best human hymns at the present hour; and they have at least as much claim to a place in the worship of God, as human selections and composures have to supplant the "songs of Zion." If it be sinful to "teach for doctrines the commandments of men," let us take care lest we "go and do likewise," by encouraging the offering of "vain oblation upon his altar," instead of that sacred offering of eternal truth, which God, the spirit, hath sealed. In order that we may sing, in the song of degrees of David, "Behold how good, and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity," let us invariably make the sacred songs contained in the Book of Psalms the matter of our praise, and then we can rest assured that by so doing, while others may possibly be right, in employing imitations of the Divine Psalms, selections of other scriptures, or the rhapsodies of their own minds, that singing them with the spirit and understanding, we can never, never, never be wrong.

Omitting to mention other considerations, as "an explanation and enforcement of the existing law," in my humble opinion, it is both necessary and proper that this, or a similar resolution do pass.

All which is respectfully submitted by the minority of your committee.

ALEX. BLAIKIE.

After which, it was moved and seconded, that the subject be continued in the hands of the same committee until next meeting of Synod.

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Resumed the unfinished subject of Psalmody, and after considerable discussion, "Resolved, that the vote be now taken as follows: The roll be called, and the members be called to say which report and resolution be adopted, Dr. M'Carroll's or Mr. Blaikie's; upon counting, it was found that the vote stood as follows:

For Dr. M'Carroll's.—Dr. McJimsey, Wallace, J. Forsyth, Jr., M'Laurry, D. L. Proudfit, Dr. A. Proudfit, Taylor, Forrest, Dr. R. Proudfit, Johnston, Howden, W. A. McKinney, J. Forsyth, Sen., Genung, Bull, John Beveridge, Niven, Amerman, Barber, Stevenson, Qua, Scott, and Low, 24.

For Mr. Blaikie's.—Connelly, D. C. McLaren, Blaikie, J. F. McLaren, Warden, P. McLaren, McKercher, Oakly, and McDougall, 9.

And M. N. McLaren, W. McLaren, G. Mairs, jr. Gordon, Caw, Currie, James Beveridge, A. McKinney, Robinson, and Telford declined voting.