

## Preface

THE prime distinction of this Psalter is its use of the metrical version of the Psalms approved September 22d, 1909, by a Joint Committee from nine Churches of the Presbyterian family in Canada and the United States. These Churches are as follows: the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Reformed Church in America, the United Presbyterian Church of North America, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Synod, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, General Synod, the Christian Reformed Church in North America, the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, and the Associate Presbyterian Church. There had been a long-felt desire for a version of the Psalms which would satisfy modern literary standards and be recognized as the mutual property of the Churches. A movement in this direction was started in 1893, the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church then appointing a Committee to bring the project before the various ecclesiastical bodies. The outcome was the creation of a Joint Committee in 1895. After being enlarged, it met in Philadelphia on April 8th, 1897, for organization and the adoption of a plan of procedure. Though meanwhile there was much preparation on the part of some of its members, the Committee was not convened again until 1900, when on April 20th the first session for actual work began in New York City, lasting six days. From that date lengthy meetings were held twice a year until April, 1905, when the Revision was finished and sent to the interested Churches for action thereon. Most of these Churches commended the progress made, but desired the Joint Committee to continue its efforts toward a version of still greater excellence. The Joint Committee, to aid it in this matter, waited for reports from the Committees representing the Churches, with the criticisms and suggestions they might convey.

The Committee of the United Presbyterian Church, increased and definitely instructed by the General Assembly of 1905, set itself very earnestly to its duty, proposing practically a new metrical translation of the Psalms. The Committee as now constituted consisted of David A. McClenahan, D.D., LL.D., Chairman, David R. Miller, D.D., William E. McCulloch, D.D., John McNaugher, D.D., LL.D., William J. Reid, D.D., and William I. Wishart, D.D. It had the invaluable help of Edward A. Collier, D.D., of the Reformed Church in America, and of Charles E. Craven, D.D., of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, both of whom had shown already superior poetic gifts as members of the Joint Committee. Three years were spent on the undertaking, the Committee meeting weekly, except during the vacation periods. The Committees of the other Churches did little in the meantime, being informed of the work that was being prosecuted on so large a scale by the United Presbyterian Committee. In April, 1909, proof sheets of the Version were forwarded to the members of the Joint Committee, who offered emendations and additions, many of which were accepted. On September 21st, 1909, the Joint Committee gathered in the Allegheny Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, where two days were

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occupied with a review of the Version. With some slight retouching, it was submitted to the Churches by almost unanimous agreement as the Joint Committee's final report.

The Version was presented to the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church at Knoxville, Tennessee, in May, 1909, subject to such minor changes as might still be made by the Joint Committee. The General Assembly overtured it to the Presbyteries, where an overwhelming vote in its favor was recorded. In pursuance of this legal approval by the Presbyteries, the General Assembly of 1910, meeting in Philadelphia, formally authorized the Version as The Book of Praise of the United Presbyterian Church of North America.

In this Version the inspired Psalms have been rendered into choice English verse, while yet the freshness and strength and sober dignity of the Hebrew originals have been preserved. Besides the familiar meters, a number of more recent type have been introduced, permitting an ampler drawing from the copious stores of church music of the past and present. The Psalms that are prized most highly have special treatment, there being two or more renditions of them, differing metrically. In the thought of many this versification of the Divine Hymnal, because of its merit and its undenominational character, is destined to receive broad acceptance and become historic.

Confidently anticipating the indorsement of the Version by the Church, the Board of Publication in 1909 appointed an Editorial Committee to prepare a Psalter, and on November 29th of that year the initiative was taken in a task only now happily concluded. In this new manual of praise the Psalms are divided into four hundred and thirteen sections. By such partitioning many passages of peculiar interest which otherwise would be unsung are brought under observation. In every instance the Psalm numeral and the meter signature are printed prominently. Instead of numbering the stanzas of a Psalm consecutively through several sections, the stanzas are counted over again in each, and the continuous order is indicated in brackets below the music. Supplementing the entire Psalm, there is an occasional selection of stanzas that frame up into a good unity. Some of these selections belong to the text of the Version; others have been drafted by the Editorial Committee. A few choruses, nine in all, are employed. The headings on every page embody the keynote or leading strain of the several sections, and are designed to contribute meaning to the service of song.

In the search for tunes the Committee has made an exhaustive study of the best collections of congregational music in America and Great Britain. The tests constantly applied were harmony with the lofty sentiment and spiritual utterance of the Psalms, genuinely musical quality, promise of permanence, and popular adaptation. Many of the old Psalm tunes retain their place, not because of any prescriptive right, but by reason of their intrinsic value. Seventeen tunes appear for the first time, having been written especially for this book. Each tune is set but once. This rule secures a wealth of music, so that this Psalter contains no less than four hundred and thirty-six tunes, inclusive of twenty-three alternates. A fixed association between tune and words is also gained thereby. Commonly marks of expression or speed have been avoided, it being judged better

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that organists and choirs should themselves seek such a musical interpretation of the Psalms as will be edifying. The Committee was exceedingly fortunate in obtaining the co-operation, as expert musical editor, of Mr. Charles N. Boyd, Instructor in Church Music in the Western Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh. To his skill and painstaking care very much is owing. The Committee takes this opportunity to thank the composers and publishers who have granted free permission for the use of copyright material.

Together with the ordinary indexes, a topical index, analyzing and classifying the rich content of the Psalms, has been provided. This supplies a ready reference for both doctrinal and practical themes. The Psalter has been made more complete as a service book by the insertion of Responsive Readings. It is believed that the growing number of congregations which have a responsive exercise in their order of worship will welcome this new feature. To the Responsive Readings are appended two doxologies and the Apostles' Creed for public repetition.

With this brief preface the book is sent forth upon its sacred mission. It presents anew the immortal songs of the Holy Spirit, those matchless hymns of the Bible which have been sung in far-off countries and centuries, which were chanted by our Lord and His disciples, and which with their measured language of religious feeling and devotion will abide until the end. In submitting the results of its labor the Committee expresses the earnest hope that the Church may be able, more worthily than ever, to fulfil the injunction: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God."

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