

## The Presbyterian Review.

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Toronto, November 14, 1895.

### Revision of the Metrical Psalter.

THE report of the Hymnal Committee laid before the last General Assembly contained a recommendation on which for some unexplained reason, no action was taken, but which ought not to be lost sight of. It was to the effect that "the Assembly considers the advisability of revising the Metrical Version or the Psalter and adding other suitable versions with a view to removing difficulties in the way of the Psalms being more generally used in public worship." From old association Rouse's version is dear to the hearts of most of our people and it would be a pity to displace it altogether. But it is admitted on all hands that in many parts it is rough and uncouth, while almost everywhere its rhythm is based upon pronunciations which have now grown obsolete. In its present form it is not well suited for popular use and is being superseded by hymns which in many cases are vastly inferior in spiritual power. It would be nothing less than a calamity to the spiritual life of the Church were the Psalms to be practically dropped from the public services of the sanctuary. Many are inclined to think that serious damage has already been suffered and that it is high time something was being done to restore them in some measure to their former prominence. In a few congregations, especially in Scotland, an attempt has been made to secure this by using the prose version, either for chanting or for responsive reading, as is done in the Anglican. And much might be said in favor of this course. But it is more in accordance with the genius and past history of Presbyterianism to adhere to the Metrical Version and make such modifications therein as will bring it into harmony with the taste of the age. Several bodies, such as the Irish Church and the United Presbyterian Church of North America have already carried through such revisions with considerable success, and the need for it is being felt by many others if they are to retain the Psalter at all, even as part of the material for praise. During the past year four of the American Churches have appointed committees of their Supreme Courts to consider the matter of a joint revision, viz., the Presbyterian Church (North), the United Presbyterian Church and two of the Reformed Churches. The four Committees held a preliminary meeting for organization in Philadelphia on the 24th Oct. last and resolved to extend an invitation to the remaining Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in the United States and Canada to co-operate in this movement. It may be assumed, therefore, that some communication to that end will be laid before the next General Assembly; and the invitation ought to be accepted. In some respects it would be more agreeable to many doubtless to co-operate with the Scottish Churches in carrying out such a project, inasmuch as

we are endeavoring to secure a Common Hymnal with them. But they are very far from being ready to consider any proposal for the revision of the Psalter, and we cannot very well afford to wait twenty years until they come to it. By that time the Psalter will perhaps have disappeared from use among us and we should simply have to recover all the ground that had been lost in the interval. The American Churches seem to be ready now, and it is well that we should have a link of connection with them in our material for praise as well as with Scotland. As stated in the memorial that led to the appointment of these four Committees the object is "to secure a metrical version of the Book of Psalms which will be correct and elegant and conform to the present canons of literary taste in the English tongue. The object proposed is not to commit any body of Christians to the use of such book, in whole or in part, when completed, but to secure if possible a metrical translation of the Psalter of such excellence as will command it to the taste and judgment of all who may desire to use the Psalms in praise, and as will secure it a place in the hymnody of all the churches. It is believed that the material for such a version is already in hand and is to be found in the many versions and the many manuals of the churches, as also in many separate individual renderings. Thus, while new renderings would not be excluded from consideration, the proposed work would be chiefly that of collation, selection and compilation of metrical translations now in existence." On such a basis we need not hesitate to entertain the proposal. The new version will stand or fall on its own merits.

### Australian Federatio

The Australian press treats in terms of satisfaction of the recent meeting of the General Assembly held at Sydney. And one reason, at least, there has been for thankfulness in the consummation of a federation of the various General Assemblies of Australia and Tasmania. The general body will now be known as the Federal Assembly of the Presbyterian Churches of Australia and Tasmania and now that a federal connection has been reached the time may be near when an integral union shall be possible. The basis and scope of the union are set forth in the broad terms of the report presented by the Committee on union thus:—"The Committee were unanimously of opinion that union should be sought in at least the two matters of Foreign Missions and the training of students for the ministry. The proposal to change the names of the present General Assemblies to Synods has been abandoned. The committee recommended as the basis of union the acknowledgment of the Scriptures as the supreme standard, and the confession of faith as the subordinate standard, using along with it a declaratory statement mainly identical with that which is adopted by the Victorian Church. There was to be no interference with the property or funds of any of the existing Assemblies except in the case of money devoted to Foreign Missions. The Committee also proposed one uniform system of theological training, and one standard of qualification for the ministry." This report carried, and the details of the agreement were approved of with practical unanimity after courteous and friendly and full discussion.

The Moderator's address emphasized the necessity for a clearer assertion of the distinctive principles of Presbyterianism, while cherishing at the same time a feeling of kindness towards other Churches. He thought that most of those who had deserted the