

Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces on this important subject.

It will readily be admitted that the matter of praise in the christian church is very important. There has long been division of sentiment on this point. One part strictly adhering to the collection of inspired poetry made under the immediate supervision of the Holy Spirit, and designed for the use of the church in all ages of the world; and the other part improving, as they think, on this collection, by using, in connection with it, a collection of hymns by uninspired men. To this latter part the author of the papers on Christian Hymnology clearly belongs. He engages, *con amore*, in the work, and labors zealously to prove, not only the propriety, but also the necessity, for largely increasing the number of hymns to be used in the service of Praise in the Sanctuary.

In a discussion on this subject, the great object which we should seek, is to know, so far as it can be known, the mind of God in the matter. What man may think expedient and necessary to promote real devotional feeling, and to advance the cause of religion, may have a very different tendency in the sight of God. It is well known that nearly all the errors and abuses in the Christian Church originated in this way. Man thought these things would promote the interest of true piety. The rites, and forms, and ceremonies which constitute the principal part of worship in the Church of Rome, and which are also to be found largely prevailing in some other churches, were introduced by men who imagined that these would tend to produce devotional feeling, and promote the interests of religion, by rendering it more attractive to the men of the world, and thus promote the glory of God. The experience of the church shows that in this they committed a fatal mistake, and that they were not guided by the wisdom that comes down from above. Instead of promoting the glory of God, these things come between the worshippers and God, and detract from his glory by drawing their attention from him to empty forms, and instead of leading them to trust wholly in the merits of Christ, to trust in their own merits, to the ruin of their souls. It cannot be doubted but that this same spirit is largely manifesting itself at the present day. Men are becoming dissatisfied with the simplicity of gospel worship. Hence the cry is heard on every hand, for the introduction of something new to meet the wants of the present age, and to make the gospel not only attractive but to give it power. Just as if the gospel had lost its power, and as if the simplicity of gospel worship was not as well adapted to the refinement of the nineteenth century, as to

the primitive ages. Amid the clamour for innovations, the good old way is not only in danger of being discarded, but altogether lost. Comparatively few are asking for the "Old Paths," that they may walk therein. It becomes us, therefore, carefully to examine in the light of divine truth, so far as that light can be brought to bear upon the subject, and not in the light of human wisdom, any innovation or change which may be proposed. In reviewing the papers by Mr. Harvey, I design not so much to enter into the merits of the subject, as to examine the soundness of the arguments by which he supports his views, overlooking the drapery by which they are surrounded.

His first reason for the introduction of an "enlarged Hymnal" into the "Service of Song" in the Sanctuary is the "growing conviction" felt for it; "in those branches of the Presbyterian Church in which hitherto the Service of Song in the house of the Lord has been restricted to the metrical version of the Psalms." In proof of this feeling, he refers us to the opinions of a number of eminent ministers of the gospel, some of them still living, while others of them have passed away. Admitting that there is this growing desire, though its extent might be fairly questioned from the efforts made to convince the church of the necessity for more hymns, the enquiry suggests itself, is the desire of the church, or the will of God, to regulate the matter of praise in the Sanctuary? Is God or the church the better judge of what is best to promote the Divine glory, and the spiritual improvement of the people of God. Unless it can be fairly proved from Scripture that God has left this matter in our hands, to regulate as we see best, it is vain to argue about it. The church on earth is fallible. There may be a growing conviction that she could introduce into Divine worship that which would promote her own spirituality, and make her more attractive in the eyes of the world, and thus promote the interests of true religion, but there may be an error in that conviction. It cannot be doubted, but that the church has introduced many things into the worship of the Sanctuary, in this way, the tendency of which has been decidedly injurious to the cause of true religion.

That God has not left the matter wholly in our hands is abundantly evident from the fact that he has made a collection of inspired poetry for the use of the church in all ages. The question arises here, has He left it with us to add to this collection what we may consider lacking in it? To this it may be replied that it is not the manner of the Almighty to do His work imperfectly. "His work is perfect." The collection of inspired poetry which He has made for the use of the church is either