

selves of an inestimable privilege—the one by never singing Psalms, the other, by never singing Hymns. I would myself, be always ready to sing either the one or the other, according to time, place, and circumstances—suitableness to the frame of mind, or adaptiveness to the special occasion. But, while claiming this liberty and privilege for myself, I would cheerfully concede the same liberty and privilege to these extremists. The case is one pre-eminently demanding a practical application of the memorable Apostolic exhortation, “Let every one be persuaded in his own mind”—and be fully allowed to act accordingly.

As a treasury of praise and thanksgiving, and a record of infinitely varied religious experiences, nothing, nothing is comparable to the Psalms of David. Rather than forego the use of them, I would be prepared to submit to any sacrifice.

A bringing out more explicitly and more fully, in the light of the New Testament economy and of Evangelical experience, the grand fundamental truths connected with Redemption through the blood and righteousness of our adored Immanuel, and sanctification by the grace of the Holy Spirit, there are many Hymns that are altogether invaluable. Rather than forego the use of these, I would also be prepared to submit to almost any sacrifice.

My own impression has always been, that the right thing for all our Churches to do, would be this, viz: for each Church, out of the vast mass of existing hymns,—in Germany, amounting to literally tens of thousands,—to select a certain number—a few scores or a few hundreds, as the case might be—of such as it could set its imprimatur or seal upon, as being sound in doctrine and sentiment, according to its own views and interpretation of Holy Scripture. Then publish these in a volume along with the Psalms of David, which ought ever to be put in the forefront as “given by Inspiration of God”—saying in substance, “The Psalms of David need no authorization from us, in order to be sung by individuals or congregations; they have already the impress of God’s Holy Spirit. The Hymns, here selected, being composed by uninspired men, yet men, for the most part, full of faith and the Holy Ghost, we do not direct or order to be sung either by individuals or congregations; we only state that, having carefully examined them, we find them to be, in our judgment, scripturally sound in doctrine and sentiment, and such, therefore, as may be safely and profitably sung by individuals or congregations who may be inclined or disposed to do so.

What would be more reasonable, more equitable, more tolerant than a decision like this? It is, in point of fact, what the Church of Scotland did many years ago, when it appended Paraphrases, which are just Hymns, to the Psalms; and did not order, but simply authorized them to be sung by individuals or

congregations who choose to do so. This seems to me the right way of solving and settling the whole vexed question.

A Church or ecclesiastical body may prohibit hymns from being sung; but such prohibition is not wise. So long as men’s souls are spiritually languid, it does not signify much; they will not trouble themselves much about the singing of Psalms or Hymns, or singing anything at all. But let the fountain’s of the great deep of old Nature be broken up in men’s souls, as under the earthquake heavings of a mighty revival, and the spiritual instincts let loose and intensified, will find for themselves vent in sacred song; and cannot be restricted to Old Testament Psalms, however incalculably precious in their own place. Under the flow and current of spiritual energy, the prose of Scripture will often be used as a chant; prayer will often become a sort of chant; the glow and fervor of inward feeling diffusing a radiance over all surrounding objects, and the visible manifestations of grace in the awakened and converted—all, all will be turned into matter—often it may be extemporaneously—of sacred song. Under the stir and gush of spiritual movement and excitement, let a hymnist only strike up such a simple ode, with accompanying tunes, as that which begins with the familiar words, “Nearer my God to thee”—and I venture to say that the stiffest, the sternest, and the most exclusive Psalmist would, in spite of himself, his preferences and antecedent convictions, be carried along with the tide of “grave, sweet melody,”—and almost unconsciously, contribute his own quota to swell the stream.

Has not something of all this been actually experienced in most of your great American revivals? It was assuredly so in the time of the Reformation, which was the greatest revival of religion, not only in modern times, but since the day of the mighty Pentecostal effusion.

Luther began his amazing career by singing hymns as a boy; he also composed hymns of his own in riper years, which are still sung in the Protestant Churches of Germany; and of these hymns it has been asserted, as an historical fact, that they carried the precious truths of God’s inspired word to many hearts which would never have been reached by ponderous tomes of theology. But Luther was also a great singer of Psalms; and the 46th will ever be known as Luther’s favorite Psalm.

And we may rest assured, that, whether there be revivals or not amongst us, people will sing hymns of some kind, whether Churches grant them liberty to do so, or otherwise. And if they will not be wisely directed by ecclesiastical rulers to hymns that are spiritually sound in doctrine, as well as in the expression of evangelical feeling and experience, they will often, in their ignorance, carelessness or folly, choose hymns for themselves which may be very unsound in doctrine, as