

HYMNOLOGY

The Rev. DR. REID read overtures on Hymnology from the Synods of Ottawa and Montrea', and Hamilton, and London, and from the Presbyteries of Hamilton, Paris, Miramichi, and Whitby. Mr Laing (Dundas) supported the overture from the first named Synod, which was as follows:

"Whereas, it belongs to the Supreme Court of the Church 'to deal with matters of common concern to the Church respecting worship, and particularly respecting the service of praise: and whereas, at the time of union it was resolved 'that further action' in this matter 'should be left to the legislation of the united Church:' whereas, also, a great variety of collections of hymns are in use in the several congregations and Sabbath Schools, and some of these contain hymns of an objectionable character: whereas, further, it is expedient and dutiful that an effort be made to secure uniformity in the service of praise, as far as possible, and to have only such hymns used as the Church can approve; therefore, the Presbytery of Hamilton respectfully overtures the venerable the General Assembly indicted to meet at Hamilton in June next, to consider the best way for providing a hymn-book for the use of such congregations as may see fit to use hymns. At the same time taking order that no other collection than that so provided shall be hereafter introduced in the service of praise in the congregations and Sabbath Schools of the Church."

MR. LAING claimed that the Assembly had full powers to proceed in this matter. They were introducing no innovation. The use of hymns had been already tacitly sanctioned by the terms of the basis of Union, as well as by use and wont in many of the congregations, and it was now too late to attempt to disallow them. What was contemplated by the overtures was to attain, if possible, greater uniformity in the service of praise throughout the Church, and to prevent the introduction of hymns of an objectionable character which were finding their way into modern collections, especially in the books used in some of the sabbath schools. It was not fought, he said, to force the use of a hymn-book on any congregation, nor to prevent any from using the books they now had, but rather to provide a collection which the Assembly could recommend to congregations desirous of introducing the use of hymns, and he knew there were such congregations, his own being among the number.

MR. ARMSTRONG supported the overture from Synod of Montreal and Ottawa. He held that it was the duty of the Assembly to regulate the character of the hymns used in the Church, and hoped they would cater upon the consideration of the question at once.

MR. McMULLEN (Woodstock), who represented the Presbytery of Paris, could not see why he should be prevented from praising God in carefully prepared words of human composition and at the same time be

permitted to offer prayer in his own language. While he venerated the Psalms of David, and would be sorry to see them superseded altogether by hymns, he felt that it required christians of more than ordinary intelligence to sing some of these psalms to edification. He believed the church was now desirous of proceeding in the direction indicated by the overtures, and that they might as well try to drive back the genial influences of spring, as attempt to extinguish that desire by legislation.

MR. ROGER appeared on behalf of the Presbytery of Whitby. He held that there were only three courses open to the Assembly: first, to stop the use of hymns altogether, which could not be contemplated for a moment: second, to let things go on as they were, which was undesirable: and, third, to prepare a good collection, and that was what the Assembly ought now to do.

MR. MUNGO FRASER was thoroughly in accord with the last speaker. He would sum up all he had to say on this subject in one brief sentence: "Now's the day and now's the hour!"

PRINCIPAL CAVEN while frankly avowing that his sympathies lay in the direction of the overtures, was of opinion that the Assembly should proceed with the greatest possible regard to what was constitutional, and with tender regard to the consciences of the brethren who differed from them on this question. He thought the mind of the Church should be fully ascertained as to what line of action was the best that could be taken. He had unlimited confidence in the wisdom and forbearance of the Church at large, and was not afraid to trust the lower courts with the discussion of this, or any other subject that might be constitutionally brought before them.

MR. BLACK (Montreal) suggested that the remit be sent to Sessions also.

The MODERATOR said it struck him that Principal Caven's motion might be constructed with a more careful reference to what he might call in some respects, the constitutional position of the Church in regard to the subject. This remark brought both the learned clerks to their feet. Dr. Reid read from the Basis of Union, to show that the whole system of hymnology was subject completely to the legislation of the Assembly. The overtures pointed in a certain direction, and they must assume that the remit would be framed accordingly.

PROFESSOR MACKERRAS cited rules of order in support of the constitutionality of the procedure contemplated by Principal Caven's motion.

PRINCIPAL GRANT conceded the constitutional point, but questioned the expediency