

among the Puritans ; Cromwell and the Ironsides sang it as they went to battle. In Scotland, with all the associations that have gathered round it, it is very dear to the whole people ; but it has not made its way elsewhere, and will not be adopted by any other nation. Very few hymns, not psalms, were written before the time of our Isaac Watts. He is the father of modern hymnology. His merits we all know, and every body of Christians that has made a hymn book since he wrote, has most practically acknowledged. As long as the English language is spoken on the earth, his verses will be sung. It is a noble fame ! I cannot but regret, however, that in his version of the Psalms, he has allowed his principle of "accommodating them to the language of the New Testament" to lead him into such extensive deviations from the original. I sometimes prefer John Rous's rugged rhymes. The number of psalm and hymn writers since Watts' day is legion, and their praise is in all the churches. Hence our difficulties about a hymn book. The older books, Tate and Brady, Rous, and even Watts, are universally deemed insufficient ; the other writers have given us only isolated hymns ; no authority has existed to select and prescribe a collection ; and thus the matter has been left to individual action. In all quarters of England, local collections are added to Watts, or supersede him altogether. Here, we have American books also ; and thus, we have a most extensive variety. I have given out psalms and hymns, from Canadian Congregational pulpits, from Watts alone, from the Scottish Psalms and Paraphrases, from the New England "Watts and Select," from the Lower Canada Union's "Church Psalmody," from Watts and the Congregational Hymn Book as a supplement, from Dr. Reed's "The Hymn Book," from the American New School Presbyterian "Church Psalmist," from Nettleton's "Village Hymns," and from "Wesley's Hymns," perhaps from others also. It is a great misfortune that there should be such diversity. Would it not be a great gain, if our people, go where they might, would have always find the same hymn book in a Congregational church ? Now, can we hope for such a result ? I do not know any way in which we are more likely to approach it, than for this body collectively to recommend some one book to the churches, and for its members individually to use all their influence in each locality in the same direction, especially in the formation of new churches. For the sake of so desirable a uniformity, will not pastors and churches be willing to sacrifice something of their individual preferences, if a decided majority of their brethren should select some other book than they might have taken, if left to themselves ? As to the unqualified exercise of the right of private judgment in such a matter, "all things are lawful," but are all things "expedient." But if the recommendation of the Union is to be of any force, it must be wisely made, and the book they select must *commend itself* to all hearts as a right good one, if not to every person the best. No period has presented itself when a choice could be made so well as at the present ; for there are books, new and old, in ample variety. If we let the present time go by, I fear it will be too late, as these books will have been adopted, one here and one there, by churches on the look out, and then no other change can be made for many years. If we can now endorse the book intrinsically best, it may gradually come into use throughout the whole field.

This subject demands the earnest and careful investigation of the best men we can appoint to the duty. A hymn book has to do with us every one, and with all the members of our churches and congregations, and this every sabbath, in some cases every day. It affects the spiritual character of those who use it most mightily, manifoldly, and unceasingly. We want a book that will teach us how to feel aright towards God and Christ, and the Spirit, towards earth and heaven, towards the church and towards the world ; that will encourage no morbid forms of religious sentiment, but be full of spiritual life and health ; that will show a sinner how to come to the Saviour ; that will express every true phase of Christian experience, and even correct the false ; that will furnish something to sing appropriate to every sermon, to every turn in a prayer meeting, to every special occasion ; that will be the chosen companion of our closet-hours, and be found on every family altar ; that will contain the old hymns around which have clustered the holy memories of the past, but not exclude the newer psalms of the present day—the hymns of