

good man is as inflexible an advocate for "man-made" and extemporaneous prayer as for Divinely inspired praise; you may tell him how holy men in all ages, in their best moods, when most under the influence of the Spirit, have "broken forth in songs," and could not forbear inditing the good matter, and how their winged words have gone up and down the earth preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, and are every moment helping souls to praise and pray; you may point out how full most of these hymns are, especially the favourites, of the doctrine, the sentiment, and the very language of the Bible; you may ask him how the glories of Redemption can be fully celebrated in the words of those who saw Messiah only "through a glass darkly;" and you are very likely to find that your friend has at home a volume of sacred poetry which he loves to read, which greatly refreshes him by the way, but which he would not *sing*, at least in Church, for the world! Let him depart in peace. If you cannot change his mind, he will not trouble yours.

You have decided, then, to admit hymns of human authorship into your collection. But *of what authors?* Must they all be Protestant, orthodox, converted? Or will you take any good hymn, asking no questions for conscience' sake? Some of the most touching and spiritual hymns have been written by persons we should scarcely deem fit for church-membership. Thomas Moore and Faber among Catholics, and Mrs. Barbauld and Dr. Bowring among Unitarians, are examples. Yet the knowledge of the source from which such hymns have proceeded mars our enjoyment of them, unless we can take refuge in the thought, so beautifully expressed by Faber:—

"Ah! Grace, into unlikeliest hearts  
It is thy boast to come;  
The glory of thy light to find  
In darkest spots a home."

You must next consider *what class of sacred poems* shall be admitted. Is it enough that the sentiments and language be correct, and the versification regular? Will these elements make a true hymn? So Editors have thought, for there are multitudes of such compositions in our books. But do they lift up the heart? How far, again, is *poetical imagery* a sufficient or necessary qualification? There are many exquisite poems on religious subjects, that our spiritual taste pronounces unfit for the uses of worship. Yet these, too, abound in the books, and are very popular. To us it appears that the essential element in a Christian hymn is, that it *express some feeling of a Christian heart*. That feeling must be caused by some thought, that thought will be a truth, and therefore the hymn will be doctrinally sound; but mere "theology in rhyme" is not devotional poetry. And feeling may array itself with ornaments borrowed from imagination, while it does not depend on these, for some of our noblest hymns have no metaphor from their beginning to their end. Christian feeling is itself poetical: inspiration speaks of "the beauties of holiness." It is easy to lay down such principles as these in theory, but to apply them in practice, to say whether a specific hymn is admissible under them, is quite another matter. There is difficulty, for instance, with those excesses of feeling exhibited in the *amorous* style of spiritual songs,—as far inferior to the Bible in real fervour, as in purity of taste. Regard, too, must be had to the *length* of the hymn. It is to be sung rather than read, and it must be brief, yet complete. Are there not poems in nearly all collections, too long to be sung, too connected to be abridged, yet almost too popular to be omitted? Their