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# A New Hymnal For Worshipping God In Song

Steve Wolfgang

[A beginning caveat: This lecture was written and compiled by Steve Wolfgang, who deserves any blame for its shortcomings. Parts of it, however, are shamelessly borrowed from the work of Mark Coulson, David Maravilla

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**James Stephen Wolfgang** was born 8 December 1948 in Indianapolis, to James H. and Jean Wolfgang, who still reside there. Steve's father and grandfather were elders in several Indianapolis congregations for more than 50 years. Steve's brother John, is an elder for the East County church in Portland, OR. His sister, Janet, is married to Mike Hardin, who preaches for the Kettering church in Dayton, OH. Steve attended Florida College, where he met his wife, Bette (Ashworth). They married in 1969 and have two married daughters, Lesley and Lindsay. Bette is a board-certified psychologist now in private practice. Steve has preached in Marion, Indiana; Atlanta, Georgia; Franklin, Tennessee; Louisville, Kentucky, and since 1979 at Danville, Kentucky, where he has also served as an elder since 1999. Steve has preached the gospel in nearly forty states and a dozen foreign countries, primarily in Eastern Europe, Russia, and China. He and Bette have conducted weekend or week-long marriage seminars in churches and other venues in various places in several states and in Australia.



Steve graduated from Butler University and earned an M.Div. at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, as well as an M.A. in American Intellectual History from Vanderbilt University, and a Ph.D. in the History of Science and Medicine from the University of Kentucky. Steve has taught history at the University of Kentucky since 1993. Over the years he has engaged in radio and television news broadcasting at CBS and NPR affiliates. In his local community, Steve has been active in many public school activities, and has served as Board member and President of Heritage Hospice. Like his father, Steve has led singing for many years, and helped host R. J. Stevens' singing school in Danville in 1987.

and Craig Roberts, all from the *Sumphonia*<sup>1</sup> group, who may present some of this material as well as lead the singing for the 2007 Truth Lectures. Together, along with Charlotte Couchman, we are the Senior Editors of the forthcoming new hymnal].

**To the uninitiated, it appears strange that the last man who publishes a tune book does not reproduce the popular pieces in all previous publications, and thus combine in one the excellencies of all.<sup>2</sup>**

How does one go about selecting hymns for a new hymnal? In order to comprehend the difficulties inherent in selecting a mere 800-900 hymns for inclusion, consider the following items:

- Even limiting the selection to the hymnals most used among “Churches of Christ” in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a collation of their indices produced a list of more than 1,800 hymns selected by the editors of these previous hymnals.<sup>3</sup> Obviously, for a new hymnal of even 900 hymns, half of these will be omitted.
- Casting the net wider, consider that the American Protestant Hymns Database, compiled by professor Stephen Marini of Wellesley College, registers more than 100,000 hymns published in America from 1640 to 1970.<sup>4</sup>
- An older and even broader database of American hymns compiled by

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<sup>1</sup> *Sumphonia* is a nonprofit foundation that formed in 2002 to produce, publish and promote hymns and to organize related activities. Its board of directors includes Craig Roberts (Columbia, MO), David Maravilla (Republic, MO), Mark Coulson (Waxahachie, TX), and Charlotte Couchman (Parker, CO).

<sup>2</sup> J.W. McGarvey, “Sunday School Hymns and Music,” *Millennial Harbinger*, (Fifth Series, Vol. 7, No. 6, June 1864), 261f.

<sup>3</sup> A survey of these hymns allows those who wish to log on to [www.truthmagazine.com](http://www.truthmagazine.com) or [www.sumphonia.com](http://www.sumphonia.com) to cast their “votes” and make comments about which hymns should or should not be included. The site is still active well into 2007.

<sup>4</sup> See Stephen Marini, in Philip V. Bohlman, Edith L. Blumhofer, and Maria M. Chow, eds. *Music in the American Religious Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), and Marini, “From Classical to Modern: Hymnody and the Development of American Evangelicalism,” in Edith Blumhofer and Mark A. Noll, eds., *Singing the Lord’s Song in a Strange Land: Hymnody in the Development of North American Protestantism* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005).

the American Hymn Society and housed at Oberlin College under the long-time direction of Mary Louise VanDyke, is even more extensive than Marini's, not being focused on "Evangelical" hymns—to say nothing of the broader base of Roman Catholic hymnology.<sup>5</sup>

The sheer number of hymnals and psalters published in America is stunning in scope, spanning nearly four centuries.<sup>6</sup> As one might expect, the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, maintains the largest hymnal collection in the United States (and therefore, almost certainly in the world, since the LC leaves such a huge cataloguing "footprint"—even the National Library of Australia at Canberra, for example, uses the LC system).

The Library of Congress hymnal collection numbers about 17,000 hymnals.<sup>7</sup> It is followed closely by the second-largest collection of about 15,000 hymnals at Emory University in Atlanta. This collection is formed from the original strongly-Methodist collection which was bolstered when Emory purchased the collection of 8,700 hymnals from the Hartford Seminary Foundation several years ago.<sup>8</sup> The third largest hymnal collection in

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<sup>5</sup> See the *Dictionary of North American Hymnology: A Comprehensive Bibliography and Master Index of Hymns and Hymnals Published in the United States and Canada, 1640-1978* (CD-ROM produced by the Dictionary of American Hymnology Project, Oberlin College), and Carol Pemberton, "Interview With Mary Louise VanDyke," *The Hymn* 46 (July 1995), 4-10. There is a wealth of articles, synopses, surveys, etc. found in *The Hymn* (published by the Hymn Society of America), the *Bulletin of the Hymn Society* (its British counterpart).

<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, the further work of Stephen Marini, including "Hymnody as History: Early Evangelical Hymns and the Recovery of American Popular Religion," *Church History* 71 (2002):273-306; and chapters by various scholars in Edith Blumhofer and Mark A. Noll, eds., *Sing Them Over Again to Me: Hymns and Hymnbooks in America* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006); or Richard J. Mouw and Mark A. Noll, eds., *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> Information on the various hymnal collections in this section is compiled from the author's research in many of these collections, and from data contained in Tina Schneider, *Hymnal Collections in the United States* (Methuen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> I am indebted to John Weaver, MLS, PhD, a deacon at the Embury Hills church in Atlanta and a reference librarian at the Pitts Theology Library, and Pat Graham,

the US, at about 12,500 hymnals, is at Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey.

In researching and participating in the editorial process for the new hymnal, I have discovered that perhaps the fourth largest hymnal collection in America is located at the University of Kentucky—the very university where I have taught for nearly fifteen years. The collection at UK probably exceeds 10,000 hymnals (the number is inexact since many have not yet been catalogued).<sup>9</sup>

Other hymnal collections which have proven beneficial for this study include the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, with 4,500 hymnals, largely from the Baptist tradition; Lexington Theological Seminary, with a collection of perhaps 2,000 hymnals, largely drawn from the many independent hymnal publishers patronized by the Disciples of Christ;<sup>10</sup> Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, KY, with perhaps 2,000

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PhD, Director of the Pitts Theology Library at Emory University (and also a member of another Atlanta-area Church of Christ) for allowing me unusually broad access to this major hymnal collection. I went to graduate school at Emory many years ago, and it has been a pleasure to work in this collection again.

<sup>9</sup> I thank Ronald Pen, PhD, a professor at the UK School of Music, and Gail Kennedy, Librarian of the Lucille Caudill Little Fine Arts Library, who have been especially helpful in giving me unfettered access to even the uncatalogued hymnals in the Wilcox and Lair Collections of Musical Americana (and others) in the UK Fine Arts Library. I have spent many hours rummaging through boxes of old hymnals, and attempting to identify good, solid hymns which for any number of reasons did not see publication beyond a single hymnal and thus are not as widely known as other hymns, even those of inferior quality. Ron has been insightful in raising grant money for the purchase of several major collections of musical Americana, which are not limited to, but do contain, many older hymnals as a part of these collections. Together, they compose an amazing array of hymnal publishing, both by official denominational publishing agencies, and by independent, market-driven private publishers which have produced numerous hymnals of an often “interdenominational” nature and appeal. Dr. Pen has a special interest in, and is a recognized authority on, the “fasola” or “Sacred Harp” type of shape-note singing and music (see, e.g., Ronald Pen, “Triangles, Squares, Circles, and Diamonds: The ‘Fasola Folk’ and Their Singing Tradition,” in *Kip Lornell and Anne K. Rasmussen, eds., Musics of Multicultural America: a Study of Twelve Musical Communities* [New York: Schirmer, 1997], 216ff.).

<sup>10</sup> An outstanding resource for information about hymnals in the Restoration

hymnals largely in the Methodist, Wesleyan, Holiness traditions, and Centre College in Danville, KY, with approximately 1,000 hymnals focusing on Presbyterian hymnody.

I say all this simply to give the reader a sense of the magnitude of the project undertaken by the five Senior Editors. It is impossible to realize, without actually embarking upon the enterprise, how vast are the materials and resources pertinent to American hymnology.<sup>11</sup> Although I knew something of the extent of historical hymnody before embarking on this project it is likely that, had I realized the complexities encountered since, I might well not have agreed to the undertaking. Still, the journey so far has been as fascinating as it has been frustrating at times.

Discovering, examining, occasionally revising, singing, and otherwise working with hymns produced and sung by believers across the centuries is an exhilarating experience which connects one to the “chain of believers” extending backward for centuries—and forward until the Lord returns. It instills and renews in one the desire to be a part of that great “general assembly and church of the firstborn ones whose names are enrolled in heaven”

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Movement is <https://secure.lccs.edu/library/hymnals/index.html>—a website devoted to the collection pioneered by Enos E. Dowling at Lincoln Christian Seminary in Illinois. See also Dowling, *Hymn and Gospel Song Books of the Restoration Movement: A Bibliography* (2nd ed. Lincoln, IL: Lincoln Christian College and Seminary, 1988); Kenneth C. Hanson, *The Hymnology and Hymnals of the Restoration Movement* (B.D. Thesis, School of Religion, Butler University, 1951), and notes in the “Restoration Hymnology” section below.

<sup>11</sup> Of course, the history of English-language hymnody in Britain is equally detailed, if not more so. Those interested may consult, as beginning points, works such as J. R. Watson, *The English Hymn: A Critical and Historical Study* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1997); Richard Arnold, *The English Hymn: Studies in a Genre* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995); Donald Davie, *The Eighteenth-Century Hymn in England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition: Between the Conversions of Wesley and Wilberforce* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1996); Madeleine Forell Marshall and Janet Todd, *English Congregational Hymns in the Eighteenth Century* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1982); Ian Bradley, *Abide with Me: The World of Victorian Hymns* (London: SCM Press, 1997); Nicholas Temperley, *Music of the English Parish Church* (2 vols; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979); or an older classic, Louis F. Benson, *The English Hymn: Its Development and Use in Worship* (1915; reprint, Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1962).

(Heb. 12:23)—the only place the “universal church” will ever function. What an assembly—and what a day of rejoicing that will be! Joining with thousands of thousands hymning the praise of God with those who cast down their golden crowns around the crystal sea, extolling the virtues of the Lamb who was slain that we might forever dwell in God’s presence, where sorrow and misery are eternally banished, and where light and joy evermore abide—I can only imagine.

### **Popularity, Scripturality, and Singability**

To the work, to the work: a popular perception is that editing a hymnal merely involves “deadlines and commitments” and decisions about “what to leave in, what to leave out”—to use a modern, secular lyric.<sup>12</sup> Of course, selection of hymns is an important ingredient in producing a hymnal that congregations can use to aid in worshipping God in song. But there is much more that is not, perhaps, readily apparent.

To use a household analogy, renovating the kitchen in one’s house involves more than just fresh paint and new wallpaper—one may wish to get all the way to the subflooring, rip out the drywall and re-wire, or open up the room and combine two rooms by eliminating a wall. Eventually, one surely will want to apply fresh paint and new wallpaper, and the kitchen will still be a kitchen—the same in one sense, but rather different in another way.

So it is with this new hymnal. It will still be a hymnal. But it will involve several new features, some obvious and some more subtle. It will not simply be a mere re-organization of familiar hymns (though there will be many of those). Yes, there will be a PowerPoint or projectable version. Yes, there will be numerous indices, hymn summaries, cross-references, and other ancillary materials designed to help those who wish to become worship leaders and not simply song leaders. Some of these will be in the print hymnal; others will be password-accessible online.

But to avoid re-inventing the wheel, it is instructive to consider what past hymnals have included, and how the editors of those hymnals arrived at their decisions. Should hymnal editors adopt a “minimalist” approach, publishing only the most “popular” hymns or those which are recently fashionable? Or should they take a more “directive” approach, attempt-

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<sup>12</sup> For “non-Baby Boomers,” the lyric is from Bob Seger’s “Against the Wind,” which also contains the classic line, “Wish I didn’t know now what I didn’t know then.”

ing to prescribe what they believe churches “should” be singing? Should a hymnal include mostly (or altogether) the “old, standard, well-known” or “classic” hymns? And which ones are those, anyway, and who would determine such matters—and how?

One obvious means of determining a “core collection” of familiar or “accepted” hymns known to many Americans is to access the American Protestant Hymns database compiled by Stephen Marini of Wellesley College. It is actually three separate databases, with information entered from more than 100,000 hymn texts contained in more than 200 historic American hymnals, from John Wesley’s 1737 *Collection of Hymns and Psalms* to the 1969 *Hymns of Glorious Praise* published by the Assemblies of God, the largest of the Pentecostal denominations. In addition to these hymnals either published or authorized by forty of the largest American denominational bodies, the collection sources are supplemented by widely-adopted hymnals published by well-known denominational leaders or by independent publishing houses.<sup>13</sup>

It is intriguing to compare the most-published (and therefore, presumably, the best-known) hymns during the years since the Civil War, contrasted with the list for a similar period prior to the Civil War. The most frequently-published hymns from 1861-1970 are:

1. Jesus, Lover of My Soul
2. Just As I Am, Without One Plea
3. Alas and Did My Savior Bleed
4. Nearer My God to Thee
5. All Hail the Power
6. Rock of Ages
7. My Faith Looks Up to Thee
8. There Is A Fountain Filled With Blood
9. How Firm a Foundation
10. Come We That Love the Lord
11. Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah
12. O Happy Day

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<sup>13</sup> The following lists are summarized from Marini’s chapter, “From Classical to Modern: Hymnody and the Development of American Evangelicalism,” in Edith Blumhofer and Mark A. Noll, eds., *Singing the Lord’s Song in a Strange Land: Hymnody in the Development of North American Protestantism* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005).

13. Abide With Me
14. Am I A Soldier of the Cross?
15. Blest Be the Tie That Binds
16. O For A Thousand Tongues to Sing
17. Stand Up, Stand Up For Jesus
18. When I Survey the Wondrous Cross
19. Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone?
20. Sweet Hour of Prayer

Almost certainly, all of these hymns would be familiar to most members of the Lord's church at the beginning of the twenty-first century. But notice that only six of these hymns also appear on the list of "Most Printed Evangelical Hymns" from 1737 to 1860 (below). Most of these "old favorites" would be unknown to many modern Christians; at least half the list is omitted from nearly all modern hymnals:

1. Jesus My All to Heaven is Gone
2. Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing
3. Come We That Love the Lord (#10 on the 1861-1970 list)
4. Am I A Soldier of the Cross? (#14)
5. Blow Ye the Trumpet, Blow
6. How Firm a Foundation (#9)
7. When I Can Read My Title Clear
8. On Jordan's Stormy Banks
9. All Hail the Power (#5)
10. Children of the Heavenly King
11. He Dies the Friend of Sinners
12. Jerusalem My Happy Home
13. There Is A Land of Pure Delight
14. Alas and Did My Savior Bleed? (#3)
15. Hark from the Tombs
16. O For a Closer Walk With God
17. Jesus, Lover of My Soul (#1)
18. Salvation, O The Joyful Sound
19. Come Humble Sinners
20. Jesus and Shall It Ever Be

Early in the editorial process, I also sought out current hymnals from various Protestant religious bodies, making the rounds of various Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Episcopal, Christian Churches, and Assemblies of God, talking with preachers, "music ministers," secretar-



ies—anyone who could provide an informed perspective on the varying uses of hymnals, PowerPoint displays, etc. Since the 1991 Baptist Hymnal has by now likely exceeded sales of 10 million copies, it might be useful to know what songs are being sung by our religious neighbors—especially if from time to time we convert some who may wonder why we sing (or do not sing) some hymns with which they might be familiar.<sup>14</sup>

Closer to home, and limiting ourselves to the twentieth century, the Senior Editors made an attempt to determine which hymns were known and sung among Churches of Christ, producing the website cited above. By collating the indices from eight of the most widely used (most sold) hymnals among Churches of Christ, we discovered about 1820 different hymns which had been selected for inclusion in one or more of these hymnals known and used by “Churches of Christ.” At least one (E.L. Jorgenson’s path-breaking *Great Songs of the Church*) sold millions of copies over several editions, and is probably rivaled in sales and circulation by at least two more of the eight.

Interestingly, even before we opened the website to the public to allow contemporary Christians to help us by telling us what hymns they like (and don’t like), we discovered several intriguing items just from the raw data. For example, to my amazement, there are only about 100 hymns which are included in all of the eight hymnals—I would have expected 3 or 4 times that many (but then, that just shows how much editors know!) Space does not permit listing them here, but more intriguing perhaps, is to notice what hymns were omitted by only one of the eight hymnals. On that list of hymns—which at least one editor or editorial board evidently felt unworthy of inclusion—one finds these hymns:

Almost Persuaded  
 God Is Calling the Prodigal  
 Is Thy Heart Right With God?  
 The Gospel Is For All  
 We Shall See the King  
 Who At My Door Is Standing?  
 Dear Lord and Father of Mankind

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<sup>14</sup> Estimates of hymnal sales are derived from the fascinating chapter, “Contested Praise: A Tale of Two Hymnals,” in Stephen Marini, *Sacred Song in America: Religion, Music, and Public Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say  
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling  
Sun of My Soul  
Let the Beauty of Jesus Be Seen in Me

Finally, it may be stating the obvious to note that, for a hymnal aiming to include as many as 900 hymns, at least half of the 1800 hymns included in at least one hymnal in wide use among Churches of Christ will be omitted from the new hymnal. So, almost by definition, we are steeling ourselves to hear many questions about “Why did you omit \_\_\_\_\_ [fill in the blank with a particular hymn]? It was Mama’s/Daddy’s/Grandma’s favorite!” We realized going into the project that we cannot and will not please everyone. What *we* will be less than pleased to hear are questions like, “Why was *that* hymn included—it’s just too bad (or hard, or unscriptural, or unsingable) to be included.” We hope each hymn that is selected will have evident if not obvious merit.

There are other sources of information regarding what hymns might need to be strongly considered for inclusion. If there is anything remotely approaching a “received collection” of “favorite hymns” known and sung in non-institutional churches of Christ, it would have to be those led by R. J. Stevens at the Florida College Lectures—still the largest single physical/geographical gathering of Christians from those churches anywhere.<sup>15</sup>

The following list is re-constructed from the collection of hymns sung at the Florida College Lectures each evening from 1986 to 2003.<sup>16</sup> There

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<sup>15</sup> The Senior Editors would like to express our unanimous, respectful sentiments of the five Senior Editors for the work of R. J. Stevens. Probably no one has done more in the last quarter-century to advance the joys of congregational singing—gloriously hymning the praise of Almighty God—than brother Stevens. We five personally consider him an esteemed brother who has helped each of us in our growth and development regarding congregational singing. The Editors’ agreement to work together on a new hymnal should not be interpreted by anyone as a sign of any disrespect for brother Stevens and his work. For the purposes of this paper, unless otherwise indicated, all numbered hymns refer to the numbers in *Hymns for Worship, Revised*—a fine hymnal co-edited by R.J. Stevens and Dane Shepard, and published by the Foundation for many years.

<sup>16</sup> This list was reconstructed from the nightly handout sheets containing each evening’s hymns, saved by my mother, Jean Wolfgang of Indianapolis, for eighteen years from 1986-2003. I was able to plug a few “gaps” with my own

are about 196 different hymns on the cumulative list, plus fourteen Psalms set to familiar modern hymn tunes, for a total of 210. The song led most frequently was “When All of God’s Singers Get Home” (HFW #232)—sung sixteen times (every year beginning in 1988). Other hymns, in descending rank order, are:

- 15x On Zion’s Glorious Summit  
When We All Get To Heaven
- 13x Have Thine Own Way, Lord  
It Is Well With My Soul  
The Great Redeemer
- 12x Alleluia  
Heavenly Sunlight  
Is It For Me?  
Looking To Thee  
We’re Marching to Zion
- 11x Christ Arose  
Each Step I Take  
Jesus Is All The World To Me  
Worthy Art Thou
- 10x Amazing Grace  
Hallelujah! What A Savior!  
He Hideth My Soul  
If Jesus Goes With Me  
Redeemed  
Sing On, Ye Joyful Pilgrims  
The Glory-Land Way  
The Last Mile of the Way
- 9x Blessed Assurance  
I Know That My Redeemer Lives  
Love Lifted Me  
Nearer, Still Nearer  
Praise The Lord!  
Walking Alone At Eve
- 8x Faith Is The Victory

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more limited “collection”—together we are missing only two nights during this eighteen-year run (Wednesday of 1991, and Monday of 2001). I believe R. J.’s last full year was 2004. It is a fairly representative, if not nearly complete, list.

- Hallelujah! Praise Jehovah!  
How Great Thou Art  
Just Over In the Glory-Land  
Soldiers of Christ, Arise!  
To Christ Be True
- 7x Higher Ground  
I Am Thine, O Lord  
O To Be Like Thee  
Our God, He Is Alive  
Seeking the Lost
- 6x At The Cross  
Count Your Blessings  
Immortally Arrayed  
Into Our Hands  
O That Will Be Glory  
Only In Thee  
Take Time to Be Holy  
Wonderful Love of Jesus
- 5x Fairest Lord Jesus  
God Is So Good  
He Gave Me A Song  
Near The Cross  
Near To the Heart of God  
Sun of My Soul  
The Banner of the Cross  
Wonderful Words of Life
- 4x God Will Take Care of You  
There Is a Habitation
- 3x A Beautiful Life  
Be With Me, Lord  
I Need Thee Every Hour  
More Love to Thee

What may be as interesting are those sung only once, including

I'm Not Ashamed To Own My Lord  
Lord We Come Before Thee Now  
On Jordan's Stormy Banks  
We Praise Thee O God  
What A Friend We Have In Jesus

or not at all, especially “Rock of Ages” (though the tune is used 3 times as a carrier for Psalm 51, as is the tune to “Lord We Come Before Thee Now” for Psalm 113).

Please note that this is not intended as a critique of anyone’s list of “favorite hymns” or of any particular selections. I am simply reporting what is, or what has been, in order to reflect upon what may be.

A total of 768 hymns were led during this period, of which nearly half (368) were the thirty-five hymns sung at least eight times in the eighteen years; more than two-thirds of the 768 “slots” were filled by the forty-five hymns sung five times or more during the time-span. Thus, one conclusion supported by this data seems to be that there is an “inner core” of 35-45 hymns nested inside the larger list of about 200 or so.

Among the intriguing questions raised by the frequency of some these hymns is whether expectations or familiarity sometimes “trumps” hymn quality. Are the songs led most frequently the best hymns ever written—or, at the least, so much better than the others that they demand to be led regularly? I presume no one, including brother Stevens, would say so. What about the songs which require several alto-lead or bass-lead singers, a song leader capable of directing the split-part chorus, and a congregation willing to follow that leader (not all of which are present in some congregations)? In my anecdotal experience, such songs are more likely to be led at multi-congregational “area-singings” than in a particular congregation—though clearly there are exceptions. But is the frequency with which these songs are used due more to the perceived expectations of brethren than the stunning lyrical or musical quality of the hymn itself?

These questions are not easily answered, and they raise daunting issues for those who compile and edit hymnals. Does a particular hymn, through wide usage, broad familiarity, and “traditional” acceptance, demand inclusion even if it is not lyrically very edifying? What if its popularity is due more to its musical uniqueness than any teaching or edifying merit it may possess? Should hymnal editors, or song leaders, indulge the desires of the audience even for songs which do not edify or teach as well as other hymns?<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> For an interesting discussion of this question, see James R. Davidson’s standard *Dictionary of Protestant Church Music* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1975), 135-142.

### The Nature of Hymns, Historically Considered

First, begin with the fundamental concept that hymns are words, albeit words that are meant to be sung. The God who created us in his image, and in the beginning was the Word, communicates to us in words. We speak to Him, as best we can, in a similar way, using words he empowered us to use as linguistic creatures. A foundational principle must therefore be that the words of a good hymn should praise God, reflect biblical truths, avoid false teachings, and help Christians edify themselves and others.

A hymn is often defined as a poem sung to the praise of God. Put another way, a hymn is a set of words set to music and intended to be sung in worship by a congregation of believers. Perhaps we may understand this essential concept better if we think about the psalms of the Old Testament. David did not “write the words to Psalm 23.” He wrote Psalm 23, whatever the tune may have been. We know virtually nothing about the music to which these psalms were set or sung. Nor do we need to know—a psalm may be read or recited with no music at all. Is it no less a psalm if recited rather than sung?<sup>18</sup>

While it is true that hymns are words set to music, and designed to be *sung*, too often we forget that the words make up the hymn.<sup>19</sup> Our hymns may be set to this or that musical tune, if the tune matches the meter of the words, the lyrics—the very “hymn” itself. Some have argued that, like the psalms, a hymn is no less a hymn if recited or read without reference to any sort of music.<sup>20</sup> Those familiar with the history of discussion and debates on

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<sup>18</sup> For a somewhat fuller discussion of Psalms as musical performances versus vehicles to communicate ideas and concepts, or scriptural information, see Steve Wolfgang, “God in the Psalms” in Daniel W. Petty, ed., *Studies in the Psalms: Essays in Honor of D. Phillip Roberts* (Temple Terrace, FL: Florida College, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> I say this with all due respect to Augustine (and others like him), who argue that “A hymn is a song containing praise of God. If you praise God, but without song, you do not have a hymn . . . a hymn contains the three elements: song and praise of God” (quoted in Andrew Wilson-Dickson, *The Story of Christian Music* [Oxford, UK: Lion Publishing, 1992], 25).

<sup>20</sup> For insight into this question, one may consult with profit the work of Tom Ingram and Douglas Newton, *Hymns as Poetry* (London: Constable and Company Limited, 1956), especially the discussion in the preface and introduction to this anthology. Academic and musicological debates over whether a hymn is really a hymn, or a psalm is really a psalm, if recited rather than sung, are a bit reminiscent

the question of instrumental music in worship will recognize this fact as a common, and effective, answer to the contention that some sort of instrument is inherent in the Greek word *psallo*. While it may overstress the point, some contend that not only is there no particular human instrument specified, but the idea of music itself is not necessarily inherent in the word.<sup>21</sup> The only real instrument specified is the human heart and voice—instruments of God’s divine design and invention.<sup>22</sup> Cannot a person hymn God’s praise—even if he or she can’t carry a tune in the proverbial bucket?

### New Testament Hymns

We can also easily grasp this concept when we think clearly regarding what we know about New Testament musical worship. Obviously, we know that it was vocal music, as many texts testify. Jesus and His apostles “sang” (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26; Acts 16:25). New Testament Christians “sang” (1 Cor. 14:15, Eph. 5:19)—that is, they engaged in what is known as vocal music without instrumental accompaniment (Rom. 15:9, Col. 3:16). Those who argue otherwise have a burden of proof to demonstrate which texts say or show that Jesus or his apostles ever used musical instruments in worship. Or, to answer when and where Jesus or the apostles ever instructed any Christians to do so—amid the many detailed instructions given to Christians about when and how to worship? Or, to demonstrate that any New Testament church worshiped with instrumental music. None of the other texts addressing New Testament worship (e.g., Heb. 2:12, 13:15, Jas. 5:13) describe the use of instrumental music. Indeed, this pattern of the non-use, or even active rejection, of instrumental accompaniment continued for centuries after the New Testament age.<sup>23</sup>

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of the modern debate over whether rap is really music—having rhyme, rhythm, cadence, meter (sometimes), a basic melodic line (at least loosely defined), but lacking any sort of harmony, and often lacking other musical characteristics as well. Such debates will probably continue as long as the earth stands.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, the debates between W.W. Otey and J. B Briney in Louisville (Cincinnati: F.L. Rowe, Publisher, 1908); Ira M. Boswell and N.B. Hardeman in Nashville in 1923 (reprint, Fairmount, IN: GOT, 1981); or Rubel Shelly and Dwaine Dunning in Iowa in 1978.

<sup>22</sup> See Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16.

<sup>23</sup> See the work of James William McKinnon, *The Church Fathers and Musical Instruments* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1965; PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1965); and *Music In Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge

However, beyond establishing that New Testament musical worship was vocal and non-instrumental, what else do we learn about music in New Testament worship? The answer, of course, is: “Not much.” What do we know about music “style”? Did early Christians sing in multi-part harmony? Did they sing in unison? Was the preferred “style” of worship the chant? The truth is that while God gave detailed instructions for many worship activities, we read nothing at all regarding musical “style.” (It is probably worth noting here that some have attempted, perhaps deliberately, to confuse the “nature” of worship—vocal vs. instrumental—with “style,” as though the issue were simply a matter of individual “taste” or preference).

One thing we *do* know about New Testament musical worship is that the emphasis was emphatically on the lyrics—the words—and the thoughts expressed by them. To take only one of several texts which evidently incorporate the lyrics of ancient hymns (1 Tim. 3:16; other examples would include Phil. 2 and texts in 1 Peter, for instance). The text of 1 Timothy 3:16 seems to be lyric poetry—it looks like poetry, stacked up in six neat stanzas in many English translations. Of course, it does not rhyme (unlike some modern poetry), since the emphasis was on “thought parallels”—more like “concept similarity” than “matching sounds.” Even here, with the various clauses labeled alphabetically, the thought parallelism is perhaps not immediately obvious.

- A** He who was revealed in the flesh,
- B** Was vindicated in the Spirit,
- C** Beheld by angels,
- D** Proclaimed among the nations,
- E** Believed on in the world,
- F** Taken up in glory. (NASB)

But try another arrangement, then “connect the dots”:

- A** He who was revealed in the flesh,
- D** Proclaimed among the nations,
- E** Believed on in the world,

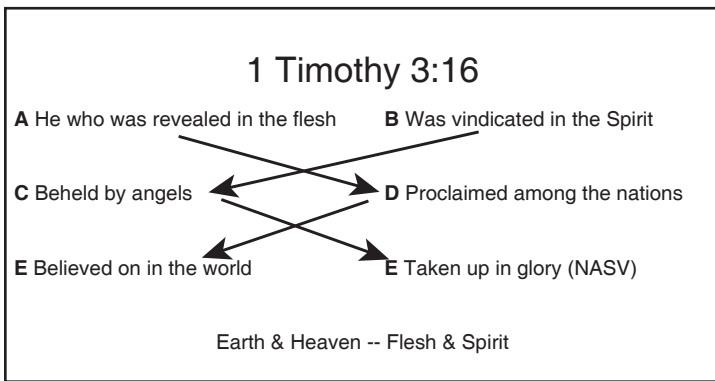
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University Press, 1989). Without recommending every assertion or conclusion or endorsing all its language, students of this subject may find helpful some of the insights of Ralph Martin, *Worship in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974); or *The Worship of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982).



- B** Was vindicated in the Spirit,  
**C** Beheld by angels,  
**F** Taken up in glory.

Observe the parallelism and the contrasts between what occurred on earth, and what occurred in heavenly, spiritual realms—and note the suggestive reference to multiple major New Testament themes such as “Earth & Heaven” or “Flesh & Spirit”—to name only a few. And, when assembled in couplet format, as we might do in a modern hymn, the contrasting structure of the hymn becomes obvious, as demonstrated in this chart:<sup>24</sup>



Careful reflection about such matters demonstrates that God has always placed the emphasis on the *words* of psalms and hymns. Other than the superscriptions to the Psalms, virtually no information has been preserved about the musical structure or format which was used to “carry” the lyrics. Still, proper emphasis must be placed upon the music as well, since it was important enough that David was diligent to see that the music was well done (1 Chron. 15:11-28; 25:1-8).

<sup>24</sup> For fuller explication of this understanding of 1 Timothy 3:16, see William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1957, 1965), 137-142. Further exploration of hymn texts incorporated in the New Testament, may be found in the online article (and its many references), “Sacred Songs / Sacred Service” by Sharon Clark Pearson at the website of the Wesley Center at Northwest Nazarene University—a provocative article from which one may gain insight without necessarily accepting all its assertions or conclusions. The URL is: [http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan\\_theology/theojrnl/31-35/32-2-2.htm](http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan_theology/theojrnl/31-35/32-2-2.htm).

_____ of the Lord	What It Is	What It Does
Law	Perfect	Converts the Soul
Testimony	Sure	Makes the simple wise
Statutes	Right	Rejoices the heart
Commandment	Pure	Enlightens the eyes
Fear	Clean	Endures forever
Judgments	True	Altogether righteous

We can also see the emphasis on the pedagogical nature of the Old Testament Psalm 19 by examining the emphasis placed upon teaching and learning the law of the Lord, as he has revealed it in language understandable by humans. It is understandable whether sung to modern or ancient tunes, chanted, or read or recited as poetry without any musical framework whatsoever.<sup>25</sup>

### The Development of Modern Hymnody

So how do we relate what we learn in the New Testament regarding music in worship to what contemporary Christians do in our modern assemblies? The development of church music following the New Testament era has been the subject of numerous studies and cannot be recounted here.<sup>26</sup> But perhaps a brief consideration of the development of American hymnals is in order. To concentrate on just a few “focal points” of the story, consider the central place of Luther’s hymns in what one music historian has called “The Roots of Contemporary Christianity.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> I am indebted for this illustration to David Maravilla, from his series on “Worshipping God in Spirit and in Truth,” Danville, KY 3 November 2006.

<sup>26</sup> Those wishing to pursue the topic may begin with any number of studies, including Hugh T. McElrath and Harry Eskew, *Sing With Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Hymnology* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Nashville: Church Street Press, 1995); William J. Reynolds and Milburn Price, *A Survey of Christian Hymnody* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing, 1987); David W. Music, *Hymnology: A Collection of Source Readings* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1996); and several of many works by British hymnologist Erik Routley, including *Hymns and the Faith* (London: John Murray, 1955), *Hymns and Human Life* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; London: John Murray, 1959); and *Hymns Today and Tomorrow* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964).

<sup>27</sup> See Don Cusic, *The Sound of Light: A History of Christian and Gospel Music* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Publishing, 2002; original edition, 1993, Bowling Green State University Press), Chapter 2.

### Music in the Lutheran and Calvinist Reformations

Lutheran songs were one of the reasons for the success of the German Reformation. They burned into the consciousness of the common people many of the doctrinal and theological concepts which were the hallmarks of Luther's dissent from Roman Catholicism.<sup>28</sup> A century later, in 1619, the Jena theologian Johan Gerhard observed, in language much like the assessments of both friends and foes of the Lutheran Reformation, that Luther had "gathered the principal and most necessary points of doctrine and comfort in beautiful German psalms and hymns, so that the simple too might make continual use of them—as has manifestly (praise God) come to pass."<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps Luther's own words describe another aspect of the phenomenon best: "Next to theology, I give a place to music: for thereby all anger is forgotten, the devil is driven away, and melancholy, and many tribulations, and evil thoughts are expelled. It is the best solace for a desponding mind."<sup>30</sup> As a recent study of Lutheran hymnology concludes, "The wide success of Lutheran hymns in the presses of sixteenth-century Germany . . . confirms the judgments of Lutheran clergymen and their Roman Catholic opponents alike that the hymns occupied a special place in the hearts of the laity, and attests to the success of Lutheranism in the homes of Germany at large."<sup>31</sup>

The contrast between the German Reformation with its somewhat freer approach to hymn-singing, compared with the Calvinist approach which tended to limit worship to psalm-singing, is too detailed to be discussed in this space. Suffice it to say that it raised several overlapping questions that would be recapitulated in other venues in the future, including the work of Isaac Watts and Robert Lowry, or the transplantation of Puritan hymnody to America. Is it appropriate (or even scriptural, some wondered) to sing hymns written by "modern" humans? Or should musical worship be limited to the singing of divinely-inspired psalms as recorded in Scripture?

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<sup>28</sup> Christopher Boyd Brown, *Singing the Gospel: Lutheran Hymns and the Success of the Reformation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

<sup>29</sup> Johan Gerhard, preface to the 1619 *Christliche Gesangbuch* . . . by Mauritius Moltzer (quoted in Brown, *Singing the Gospel: Lutheran Hymns and the Success of the Reformation*, 1).

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Michael Hicks, *Mormonism and Music* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 1.

<sup>31</sup> Brown, *Singing the Gospel*, 172.

A related set of questions concerns what might be called “singability”: Even if worship is limited to the biblical Psalms, to what extent might practical or aesthetic concerns take precedence over strictly literal translation? Another box of questions pertains to what might be called “uniformity”: How practical, or even desirable, is it to impose fairly strict musical standards, to be observed by all, as opposed to more individualistic expressions of praise to the Almighty?<sup>32</sup>

### English Hymns: Wesley and Watts

On 21 October 1735, the British ship *Simmonds* weighed anchor for a transatlantic journey, ultimately landing at the Georgia colony on 6 February 1736. Aboard were several young Oxford clergymen, dispatched by the Anglican church and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to evangelize among the native Americans. Two of them, John and Charles Wesley, ages 33 and 28, embarked at the request of General James Oglethorpe, governor of the colony and an SPG board member.<sup>33</sup>

Also aboard the *Simmonds* were twenty-six Moravian emigrants of the group *Unitas Fratrum*, transiting from Germany. Impressed with their piety and devotional worship, John Wesley acquainted himself with their bishop, David Nitschmann. Since Nitschmann did not know English, Wesley began to study German, receiving training from Nitschmann in Latin, a language both understood. The text Wesley studied for nearly six months was *Das Gesang-Buch der Gemeine in Herrnhut*, a hymnal written and compiled by Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, a German noble who provided a haven for persecuted Moravians on his estate in Saxony. Another text Wesley used to educate himself was J. Anastasius Freylinghausen’s Moravian hymnal.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> A place to begin one’s exploration of such issues is with David W. Stowe, *How Sweet the Sound: Music in the Spiritual Lives of Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 17-25. This is an intriguing academic study which ranges in its chapter topics from Watts and Wesley to John Newton, Moody and Sankey and the Fisk Jubilee Singers, to Al Jolson and Sun Ra (Herman Poole Blount), to John Coltrane.

<sup>33</sup> This account is derived largely from the chapter, “O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing,” in Stowe, *How Sweet the Sound: Music in the Spiritual Lives of Americans*.

<sup>34</sup> See John L. Nuelson, *John Wesley and the German Hymn: A Detailed Study of John Wesley’s Translations of Thirty-Three German Hymns*, trans. Theodore Parry, Sidney H. Moore, and Arthur Holbrooke (Yorkshire: Calverley, 1972).

Stowe describes an incident which helps explain Wesley's fascination with the *Unitas Fratrum* and their hymns (quoting Wesley's own *Journal*):

In the midst of the psalm wherewith their service began, wherein we were mentioning the power of God, the sea broke over, split the mainsail in pieces, covered the ship, and poured in between the decks, as if the great deep had already swallowed us up. A terrible screaming began among the English. The Germans looked up, and without intermission calmly sang on. I asked one of them afterwards, "Was you not afraid?" He answered, "I thank God, no." I asked, "But were not your women and children afraid?" He replied mildly, "No; our women and children are not afraid to die."<sup>35</sup>

Those who doubt such assertions might contemplate that he is describing the sort of faith which led many in the radical "left wing" of the Reformation—including many who had some "restorationist" concepts and practiced "believer's baptism," (meaning immersion of adult believers)—to be martyred for their beliefs.<sup>36</sup>

Seen in this context, Wesley's famous comment on the journey home, feeling his mission a failure, is the more understandable—and serves as an object lesson on the power of hymns to cause individuals to reflect upon their spiritual condition:

I went to America to convert the Indians—but who, oh who, will convert me? . . . I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well; nay, and believe

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<sup>35</sup> Stowe, *How Sweet the Sound*, 18-19. This account may also be accessed on the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute website: <http://www.cviog.uga.edu/Projects/gainfo/mora-chr.htm>—as well as at this URL: <http://www.worldwideschool.org/library/books/hst/northamerican/TheMoraviansGeorgia/chap4.html>.

<sup>36</sup> See John Christian Wenger, *Even Unto Death: The Heroic Witness of the Sixteenth-century Anabaptists*. Originally published by John Knox Press, 1961, it is available online at <http://www.bibleviews.com/EvenUntoDeath.pdf>. This work records, among other things, the heart-rending letter of a young mother, Janneken van Munstorp, burned at the stake in 1573, to her one-month-old daughter—shortly after her husband, John, was similarly executed. The work also bears this inscription of Balthasar Hubmaier, martyred 10 March 1528: "Divine truth is immortal. And although it may long be bound, scourged, crowned [with thorns], crucified, and laid in the grave, yet on the third day it will rise again victoriously, and will reign and triumph eternally." The descendants of these believers—singing the heartfelt hymns of their faith—Wesley encountered on his trip to America.

myself, while no danger is near. But let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, "To die is gain!"

Wesley's diary describes "the grip which hymns took upon his mind and heart, when once he caught the fervor of Moravian hymnody."<sup>37</sup> He translated five of the Moravian hymns for inclusion in his *Collection of Hymns and Psalms*, published at Charleston in 1737.<sup>38</sup> Interestingly, however, later in life Wesley became disenchanted with the Moravian style of hymnody, disliking the "sickly sensationalism of many of Zinzendorf's hymns"—describing them as "so erotic that they are more suitable to the mouth of a lover than in that of a sinner standing in the presence of Almighty God."<sup>39</sup> Such a description might fit equally well some of the "modern contemporary hymns" which some have labeled the "Jesus-Is-My-Boyfriend" genre.<sup>40</sup> Today, as in previous years, such hymns may appeal to a segment of a typical congregation, but often do not appeal to the majority of a typical congregation.

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<sup>37</sup> Louis F. Benson, *The English Hymn: Its Development and Use in Worship* (1915; reprint, Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1962), 225.

<sup>38</sup> Stowe, *How Sweet the Sound*, 20. Wesley's was the first hymn-book published in America (as opposed to psalm-books such as the famous *Bay Psalm Book*, the first book published in America). See also David W. Music, "Wesley Hymns in Early American Hymnals and Tune-books," *The Hymn* 39 (1988): 39f.

<sup>39</sup> Nuelson, *Wesley and the German Hymn*, 81; Stowe, *How Sweet the Sound*, 25. Of course, by that time Charles Wesley had well surpassed his brother as the most prolific hymn writer in the Methodist tradition (or nearly any other)—Stowe cites estimates of Charles Wesley's hymn output of as many as 9,000 hymns (24).

<sup>40</sup> As one modern scholar put it, commenting on the "intimacy" characteristic of many of the "contemporary worship" songs, "I have trouble saying those things to my wife, much less singing them in public worship!" (Lee Camp, David Lipscomb University Summer Lectures, Nashville, 6 July 2006). Whether or not one agrees with the criticism, it is instructive to notice that similar concerns have long been expressed regarding the so-called "gospel songs," which had their origins in a combination of the *Olney Hymns* of John Newton and William Cowper in England, and in the children's Sunday school songs popularized by Robert Lowry, George F. Root, William Bradbury, and Philip P. Bliss, among others. James R. Davidson's standard *Dictionary of Protestant Church Music* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1975), describes the genre: "By definition, a gospel song is a simple harmonized tune in popular style combined with a religious text of an emotional and personal character in which, rather than God, the individual (and/or the individual religious experience)

The work of Isaac Watts was tremendously influential, generating a massive number of studies and making it prohibitive to explore in any detail here.<sup>41</sup> But like the questions confronting the Calvinist Reformers vis-à-vis the German Lutheran Reformation (and later the Puritans in their publication of psalm-books versus humanly-composed hymns, or an analogous conundrum surrounding the later work of hymnist Robert Lowry), the central questions involved the overlapping concerns discussed above in the section on “Music in the Reformation.”

### Reformation to Restoration Hymnology

Following the transplantation of the Methodist tradition to the colonies under the leadership of Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke, some American Methodists separated from their British counterparts. One leader among such efforts was James O’Kelly (1740?-1826). Among his several publications was a hymnal published in 1816, titled *Hymns and Spiritual Songs For the Use of Christians*, no doubt reflecting his insistence on the use of the name “Christian” rather than any human name. Issued at Raleigh, NC, the hymnal contained about 350 hymns.

O’Kelly obviously was also influenced by his northern counterparts in what became known as the “Christian Connection”—especially Elias Smith, who had published in 1805 *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of Christians*, containing thirty-six hymns. Appearing only a year after Smith founded the *Herald of Gospel Liberty* (still thought to be the earliest religious newspaper in America), it was re-issued in several later editions, with Smith’s colleague Abner Jones joining him as co-editor. One of the most colorful characters associated with O’Kelly’s movement away from denominationalism was Joseph Thomas, an itinerant evangelist known for wearing a flowing white robe, and thus called the “White Pilgrim.” In 1815 Thomas issued the *The Pilgrim’s Hymnbook*, subtitled *A Companion to All Zion Travelers*.<sup>42</sup>

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is usually the center. The text, primarily concerned with . . . companionship with Jesus, is usually subjective in nature” (pp. 135-136).

<sup>41</sup> Those interested in pursuing the subject may consult D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition: Between the Conversions of Wesley and Wilberforce* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1996); or Rochelle A. Stackhouse, *The Language of the Psalms in Worship: American Revisions of Watts’ Psalter* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1997); or begin with Chapter One of Stowe, *How Sweet the Sound*, op. cit.

<sup>42</sup> Much of this section is derived from Forrest M. McCann, *Hymns and History: An*

Other early Restorationists who published hymnals included former Kentucky Congressman John T. Johnson; David Purviance and John Thompson (associates of Barton W. Stone in the Springfield Presbytery), and Rice Haggard (author of a famous pamphlet encouraging Christians to wear the name “Christian” only). These were all truly hymn books, that is, the text of the lyrics, without any musical notation.<sup>43</sup>

### *Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs*

But the leading hymnal, by far, in the early “Restoration Movement” was *Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs*, produced by Alexander Campbell in 1828. The following year, Barton W. Stone issued *The Christian Hymn Book*, a collection of 340 hymns. Interestingly, on the last page of the book, he included this note: “We have not secured a copyright for this book; but it is our intention to continue to publish, until our brethren shall advise us to stop.”<sup>44</sup>

By 1834, Campbell and Stone combined their efforts, with the assistance of Walter Scott, John T. Johnson, and Thomas Adams, to issue a second edition of *Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs*. This 370-page hymnal also contained lyrics only, reflecting Campbell’s opinion that the inclusion of musical notation “would have been a distraction from the truth and power of the words.”<sup>45</sup> Campbell also set the tone for much of the hymnal-publishing enterprise among “restorationist” groups, arguing:

the Christian psalter, psalm or hymn-book is therefore of the first importance; as, next to the Bible, no book in the world has such influence on the heart. No volume, indeed, ought to be studied with more care, and

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*Annotated Survey of Sources* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1997), a comprehensive resource which grew out of the 1986 revision by Abilene Christian University of E.L. Jorgenson’s *Great Songs of the Church*.

<sup>43</sup> See Theodore N. Thomas, “Hymnody,” in Douglas A. Foster, Paul M. Blowers, Anthony Dunnivant, and D. Newell Williams, eds., *Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 409-411.

<sup>44</sup> McCann, *Hymns and History*, 11-12. See also Harold Holland, “Hymnology of the Restoration Movement,” *The Hymn* 30 (1979), 263-268.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas, “Hymnody,” 409-410. See also George Brandon, “The Hymnody of the Disciples of Christ in the U.S.A.,” *The Hymn* 15 (1964), 15-22.



composed with more special regard to sacred style, than this book of Christian worship.<sup>46</sup>

*Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs* was so widely adopted by churches that five new printings appeared over the next nine years, with some printings adding new hymns. Issued in revised editions in 1843, 1853, 1864, and 1882 (the last after Campbell's death, and renamed *The Christian Hymnal*), *Psalms Hymns and Spiritual Songs* was by far the dominant hymnal in the first decades of the "Restoration Movement," reflecting Campbell's insistence that having a single hymnal would be a unifying influence in the newly-formed or recombined churches.<sup>47</sup> At least one of these editions sold well over 100,000 copies, and so long as Campbell controlled the book, he insisted that the proceeds from hymnal sales be used to help educate young men at Bethany College, inaugurated by Campbell in 1840.<sup>48</sup>

But not even Alexander Campbell could impose his will on the "wild democracy" of churches composed of individuals intent on abandoning all forms of ecclesiastical authority. By 1847, Augustus Damon Fillmore and Silas White Leonard produced *The Christian Psalmist*—the first hymnal among "Restorationist" churches to contain musical notation. Selling more than a half-million copies in eighteen editions, it was quickly followed in 1848 by Amos Sutton Hayden's shape-note song book, *The Sacred Melodeon*. These song books reflect the musical tastes and desires of a generation of Americans exposed to the "singing school tradition" of itinerant shape note singers who used well-known books such as Ananais Davisson's *Kentucky Harmony* (1816), Allen D. Carden's *Missouri Harmony* (1820), William Walker's *Southern Harmony* (1835), and other similar popular songbooks. The most famous and long-lived of them all, the *Sacred Harp* (1844), was so named as a reference to the human voice, the instrument of God's creation.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Christian Psalmody—No. 1," *Millennial Harbinger* (New Series, Vol. 6, No. 5, May 1842), 231.

<sup>47</sup> Peter Morgan, "Disciples Hymnbooks: A Continuing Quest for Harmony," *Discipliana* 55 (1995), 46-63

<sup>48</sup> McCann, *Hymns and History*, 13-14.

<sup>49</sup> Many of these early shape-note or "fa-so-la" songbooks have attracted enough attention from musicologists and historians to warrant reprinting by academic presses. For example, the University Press of Kentucky issued in 1987 a reprint of the 1854 edition of William Walker's *Southern Harmony*, edited by noted

In 1864, shortly before his death, Campbell transferred the rights to his hymnal to the American Christian Missionary Society, of which he had been elected the first president at its formation. Proceeds from the future sales of the hymnal would support the ACMS. As the missionary society became more controversial, many of those who opposed it sought other hymnals to use as aids to their worship.<sup>50</sup>

And there were plenty to choose from in the free-market economy of hymn publishing. Among a wide array of possibilities were Kentucky evangelist B.F. Hall's *Christian Songs* (1852), several revival-type collections by noted "singing evangelist" and author/composer Knowles Shaw, and *Popular Hymns* (1878) and *Popular Hymns No. 2* (1901), compiled for the *Christian Standard* by Christopher Columbus Cline, who taught music at J.W. McGarvey's College of the Bible in Lexington, KY. The prolific Cincinnati music publishers A.D. Fillmore, James Henry Fillmore, and their extended family continued to produce multiple hymnals, including *The New Harp of Zion* (1872), *The New Christian Hymn and Tune Book*

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musicologist and collector Glenn Wilcox, and containing a CD recording of the annual "Big Singing" shape-note convention at Benton, KY, held every third Saturday in May since 1884. In 1994, the University of Nebraska Press issued a facsimile reprint of the ninth edition (1840) of Carden's *Missouri Harmony*. All this reflects the importance of these shape-note books from which many American in the nineteenth century learned to read and sing music. The resurgence of Sacred Harp singing in the late twentieth century (reflected in the movie "Cold Mountain," for instance) also attests to the continuing power of acapella shape-note singing. See Marini's chapter on the late-20th-century revival of fasola singing, including his own successful formation of a New England fasola group, the Norumbega Harmony—complete with its own shape-note book by the same name—in *Sacred Song in America: Religion, Music, and Public Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

<sup>50</sup> A detailed recounting of many of these publications may be found in Kenneth C. Hanson, *The Hymnology and Hymnals of the Restoration Movement* (B.D. Thesis, School of Religion, Butler University, 1951). A fine summary is in McCann, *Hymns and History*, from which much of this account is drawn. This was an especially productive period for hymns written by lyricists in the "Restoration" which enjoyed wider circulation including James Henry Fillmore's "I Am Resolved"; Walter Stillman Martin's "God Will Take Care of You"; Jessie Hunter Brown Pounds' "Beautiful Isle of Somewhere"; J.H. Rosecrans' "There Is A Habitation"; Knowles Shaw's "Bringing In the Sheaves"; and A.J. Showalter's "Leaning On the Everlasting Arms."

(1882), *The Praise Hymnal* (1896), as well as an assortment of secular or political songbooks, such as *The Temperance Musician* (1853). The Fillmore publishing enterprise was rivaled perhaps only by the William E. Hackleman Company of Indianapolis. Hackleman, a trained musician, produced in 1906 an ambitious (and expensive) hymnal of 624 pages including much ancillary material—*Gloria in Excelsis*. By 1932, the *Christian-Evangelist* described *Gloria in Excelsis* as “the standard hymn-book of Disciples of Christ” and, indeed, “one of the great hymnals of all time.”<sup>51</sup>

### Hymnals Among Churches of Christ

Not everyone shared that opinion—especially among those who for conscience sake could not support the missionary society or condone the use of instruments in worship. Beginning in 1889, the *Gospel Advocate* Company of Nashville began publishing a long series of hymnals (the first being just that—lyrics only, without any printed tunes). Usually these hymnals were edited by a well-known preacher, assisted by a musician or someone with hymn-composing abilities hired from outside the Churches of Christ. Among these hymnals were *Christian Hymns* (1889), by E.G. Sewell, R.M. McIntosh, and Leonard Daugherty; *Gospel Praise* (1900) by Sewell and A.J. Showalter; the *New Christian Hymn Book* (1907) by T.B. Larimore and W.J. Kirkpatrick; and *Praise Him* (1914) by Kirkpatrick and A.B. Lipscomb, David Lipscomb’s nephew.

Beginning with *Choice Gospel Hymns* (1923) by C.M. Pullias and Samuel Parker Pittman, the *Advocate* began using only members of Churches of Christ in the compilation of hymnals. Following the production of Pullias’ *Greater Christian Hymns* (1931), the *Advocate* employed Lloyd O. Sanderson as music editor. Sanderson edited *Christian Hymns No. 1* (1935) in conjunction with Pullias, N.B. Hardeman, E.H. Ijams, and James F. Cox. Sanderson was the sole editor of *Christian Hymns, No. 2* (1948) and *Christian Hymns, No. 3* (1966).

Befitting the independent, autonomous nature of Churches of Christ, there were also a great many single-editor hymnals produced by independent publishers, or self-published. These included, among many others, S. H.

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<sup>51</sup> A complete recounting of the influences upon “Restorationist” hymnals would have to include the works of Fanny J. Crosby and others, detailed in works by Edith Blumhofer, as well as Jane Hobbs, Sandra Sizer, Susan Tamke, and others cited in the Bibliography. See especially Blumhofer, *Her Heart Can See: The Life and Hymns of Fanny J. Crosby* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005).

and Flavil Hall's *Gospel Message in Song* (1910). Some of the more successful of these were published or reprinted by papers such as the *Christian Leader* or the *Firm Foundation*. Probably the best-known of these were several hymnals edited by song-writer Tillit S. Teddlie, who died in 1987 at age 102. Marion Davis produced *The Complete Christian Hymnal* (1940), and Will W. Slater and his son, J. Nelson Slater, co-edited the *Christian Hymnal* (1963). Among the most widely-adopted modern hymnals were Ellis J. Crum's *Sacred Selections for the Church* (1956), Alton Howard's *Songs of the Church* (1971), and V.E. Howard's *Church Gospel Songs and Hymns* (1978)—though all of these last three were widely criticized in some circles for relying too heavily on the so-called “Stamps-Baxter” or “call-and-response” type of “gospel songs,” which many felt were far too entertainment-oriented to be suitable for worship.<sup>52</sup>

**An Excursus:** In our contemporary worship, some of the so-called Stamps-Baxter “call-and-response” and similar religious songs arising during the trauma of the Great Depression of the 1930's have been criticized by many as shallow and appealing more to showmanship than spirituality.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> See the description and analysis in James R. Goff, Jr., *Close Harmony: A History of Southern Gospel* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), which candidly and explicitly acknowledges the entertainment origins and intentions of many of the Stamps-Baxter and other “radio songs.” To adduce only one example, Charles Fuller's “Old Fashioned Revival Hour,” broadcast from the Long Beach (CA) Municipal Auditorium, has been described by one study in mass communication as “almost purely an adventure in nostalgia for the audience, a religious version of the old WLS Saturday Night Barn Dance” (Everett C. Parker, David W. Barry, and Dallas W. Smythe, *The Television-Radio Audience and Religion* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955), 391.

This study was a joint project of Yale Divinity School in conjunction with the National Council of Churches.

<sup>53</sup> See also Michael P. Graves and David Fillingim, eds., *More Than “Precious Memories:” The Rhetoric of Southern Gospel Music* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2004), especially chapter 2, “Oft Made to Wonder: Southern Gospel Music as Theodicy,” and chapter 3, “Southern Gospel Music vs. Contemporary Christian Music: Competing for the Soul of Evangelicalism.” For a broader consideration of such cultural concerns often posed by “contemporary Christian songs” (appearing at the dawn of the “Beatles” era), consider the comments of British hymn authority Erik Routley, in *Is Jazz Music Christian?* (London: The Epworth Press, 1964).

However, some of this criticism might be tempered. Such songs emphasize concepts such as affliction due to sin, the benefits of God's compassion, answers to despair, help in times of distress, escape from troubling circumstances, God as a refuge, perplexity at the prosperity of the wicked, and other related aspects of the common human predicament. They may perhaps achieve this emphasis more than other genres promoted by some who seek what they perceive to be a more elevated level of musical sophistication. Perhaps modern worshippers would do well to seek a balance of reverential praise and adoration, personal lament and entreaty, and evangelistic and edifying songs in our worship.

### *Great Songs of the Church*

The *Advocate* publications, particularly, were themselves partly a response to what was unquestionably the most influential hymnal among Churches of Christ in the twentieth century—Elmer Leon Jorgenson's *Great Songs of the Church*. Appearing in 1921, the first edition went through revisions in 1922 and 1925. In 1937 Jorgenson, an excellent musician, published *Great Songs of the Church, No.2*, which went through more than sixty editions and sold millions of copies, both among Churches of Christ and in wider contexts.

What made it objectionable to some was that Jorgenson was a premillennial advocate (he was, indeed, associate editor of Robert H. Boll's premillennial paper, *Word and Work*), and Jorgenson's hymnal appeared at a time when those disputes among Churches of Christ (as well as in Protestantism generally) were raging fiercely. Still, the hymnal was widely adopted and used even by many who staunchly opposed premillennial doctrines. In hindsight, it would appear difficult to document any more premillennial influence or hymn selection in *Great Songs* than in any other hymnal of the time.

Several factors made *Great Songs* such an influential hymnal. Foremost, it was the first hymnal to reap the benefits of the end of a long feud between two major hymnal-copyright holders—Edwin O. Excell and Charles M. Alexander. Each of them was a renowned song leader among the evangelical revivalists (Excell for Sam Jones and Gypsy Smith; Alexander for R. A. Torrey and J. Wilbur Chapman)—much the same as Cliff Barrrows or George Beverly Shea would become for Billy Graham. Both Alexander and Excell held the copyrights to hundreds of popular hymns, but rivalry developed into animosity, and neither would grant permissions for use in any hymnal which included any of the other's copyrighted hymns. Shortly

before their deaths, however, some reconciliation was achieved, and *Great Songs of the Church* was the first hymnal to include hymns from both collections. In fact, when a list of the “World’s Thirty Greatest Hymns” appeared in the musical publication the *Etude*, Jorgenson noted that all but one were included in *Great Songs of the Church*. The exception was “Come Thou, Almighty King,” and Jorgenson had used the traditional tune for that hymn (“Italian Hymn”) for another set of lyrics. The exclusion was, of course, corrected in later editions.<sup>54</sup>

By including many hymns known both among Churches of Christ and in wider contexts, Jorgenson not only push-pulled hymnology among Churches of Christ in a more “mainstream” Protestant direction, but he also increased the marketability of his hymnal. By publishing the book with Rand McNally, a major secular publisher with an excellent reputation, he almost certainly earned for it wider exposure than publication by a “brotherhood” publisher might have achieved. Jorgenson also arranged for the hymnal to be printed in both a shape-note edition known and used among many Churches of Christ, and in a round-note format much more common in the hymnals of other religious groups.

Before his death, Jorgenson donated the printing plates and copyright of *Great Songs* to Abilene Christian University, which re-published the 1937 edition with a supplement of sixty-four hymns in 1965, and issued a complete revision under the name *Great Songs of the Church* in 1986.<sup>55</sup> That revision, published in a round-note format, seems not to have been a commercial success, and appears to have been largely supplanted in many places by John Wiegand’s excellent hymnal, *Praise for the Lord* (1992), and by the more “contemporary” song book *Songs of Faith and Praise* (1994), published by Alton Howard. Of course, *Hymns For Worship* (1986; revised 1991), co-edited by R.J. Stevens and Dane Shepard and published for many years by the Guardian of Truth Foundation, has been widely adopted in many non-institutional Churches of Christ. Finally, this quick

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<sup>54</sup> See McCann, “A History of *Great Songs of the Church*,” *Restoration Quarterly* 38 (1996), 219-228.

<sup>55</sup> An anecdotal account of the difficulties encountered by the editors of that hymnal, as well as hymnal editorial processes generally, appeared as an op-ed article in *Newsweek*, by Jack Boyd of ACU: “An Angry Noise Unto the Lord: Fiddling around with hymns is tantamount to fiddling around with our memories,” *Newsweek*, 107:26 (December 29, 1986), 7.

survey of modern hymnals used among Churches of Christ should not conclude without acknowledging the fine work among British churches of Albert E. Winstanley and Graham A. Fisher, who produced *Favourite Hymns of the Church* (1995).

### Some Criteria for a Good Hymnal

The five Senior Editors of this new hymnal concur that the following concerns are paramount for hymns which Christians and churches should sing to worship God. We are consciously striving to consider the concept of “audience,” keeping ever before us the question, “Who is the audience for this hymnal and what it represents?” Our audience may be thought of in two ways. First, the audience includes the typical Christian in the pew, who may or may not be musically trained. Second, the audience can be considered as a group—the congregation—because the hymns published in this hymnal are primarily for a public worship service. We are asking our audience to join us in considering and adopting ways in which we may better worship God in song.

**Truth.** Truth is the most important quality of a hymn; therefore, hymns must express scriptural content. In some hymns, the entire content is based on an unscriptural idea, making the hymn difficult to edit and usually impossible to “salvage.” In other hymns, only the content of a particular verse is unscriptural, making the hymn useful so long as the unscriptural verse is edited or excluded. In still other hymns, only a word or phrase is unscriptural, and such a hymn may be used if carefully and skillfully edited.<sup>56</sup>

This first set of criteria properly places the emphasis squarely on the words, the lyrical content of hymns. There are, however, some other considerations that may govern whether a hymn is worthy of inclusion or not. For instance, much has been written lately about the “worship wars” both among “Churches of Christ” as well as in the broader “evangelical” community. Is one particular “style” of hymns, or worship, superior to others? If so, which one is it—and who makes that decision? And on what basis?

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<sup>56</sup> These criteria are adapted from Craig A. Roberts, *A Good Hymn: Analysis and Composition of Congregational Hymns* (Parker, CO: Sumphonia, 1998, 2003), 6-9. While we are reluctant to edit hymns by other authors (indeed, we cannot legally edit any copyrighted hymn without the author’s permission), occasionally and infrequently it becomes necessary to change a word or phrase to allow a hymn to more accurately reflect biblical truths, so that we may “sing with the spirit and with the understanding” (1 Cor. 14:15).

It should also be evident that even if a hymn is truthful, it may not be included, as there are other qualities (meter, rhythm, musical difficulty, “singability,” etc.) to consider.

**Reverence and Hymn “Tone.”** Lyrics have “tones,” many of which, we believe, are not suitable for worship. The very concept of “tone” is somewhat subjective, difficult to define or even describe.<sup>57</sup> What seems or sounds reverent in one culture may be deemed irreverent in another.

“Formal” tones tend to convey reverence, humility, perhaps kindness, and seem best for worship. If formal tones are not overly “stuffy” or impersonal, they can be appreciated by everyone in the congregation. “Informal” tones—especially slang, colloquialisms, or nonchalant expressions—often are not universally appreciated in a congregation because they seem crude, sloppy, or careless. Worse, they may be irreverent because they trivialize serious concepts or downplay the awesome and holy. We consider the optimum tone to be “moderately formal.”

**Meter and Phrasing.** In poetry, meter is often defined as the arrangement of words in regularly measured, patterned, or rhythmic lines or verses. Various meters are defined by the pattern and number of “feet” constituting the verse or both rhythmic kind and number of feet (usually used in combination). Those who remember a literature class in school, or are familiar with Shakespeare, may recall common metrical patterns (such as iambic, dactylic, trochaic) and the designation of the number of “feet” (trimeter, pentameter, hexameter, etc.).

Perhaps a simpler way to consider meter for the purposes of understanding (or writing) hymns is to separate meter and rhythm, defining meter as the pattern and number of syllables per line. In older hymnals (and in some of the better modern ones—including the forthcoming one where we revert to this pattern) one sees references to “Common Meter” (usually abbreviated C.M.), “Short Meter” (S.M.), “Long Meter” (L.M.), etc. “Common Meter” consists of a pattern of eight syllables followed by six syllables; then eight, followed again by six syllables—sometimes older hymnals will contain the numeric description 8.6.8.6 rather than using the designation C.M. Some examples of hymns in various meters include:

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<sup>57</sup> The discussion in this section is derived largely from Craig Roberts, *A Good Hymn: Analysis and Composition of Congregational Hymns*, *op cit.*, 44-47.



- S.M. (6.6.8.6.)—*Blest Be the Tie That Binds*  
 C.M. (8.6.8.6.)—*I'm Not Ashamed to Own My Lord*  
 L.M. (8.8.8.8.)—*When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*  
 S.M.D. (Short Meter Doubled)—*This is My Father's World*  
 C.M.D. (Common Meter Doubled)—*Faith is the Victory*  
 L.M.D. (Long Meter Doubled)—*The Spacious Firmament On High*

In older hymnals, one may frequently see reference to “peculiar meter,” and in modern hymnals many of the so-called “praise songs” are almost invariably identified as “irregular”—which often means there is not much consistent meter at all.

While some deviations from meter are insignificant (“Holy, Holy, Holy” is still a very “singable” hymn, and others such as “Ten Thousand Angels” [#580] or “Psalm 19” [#439] are often sung), but many hymns with inconsistent or irregular meter cause a congregation to do “the verbal herky jerky.”<sup>58</sup> Usually, inconsistent meter is distracting because it requires the worshipper to double-check the staff continuously, striving to “get it right.”

Now to the \$64,000 question: If we are really concerned with the words, and the thoughts they convey, at least as much as the music, why do we allow the music of our hymns to control the “layout” of our hymnals, rather than allowing the words to take precedence over the music? While not denying the importance of the music, we ask: “Which should take precedence?”

Even a perfunctory glance at any hymnal will show that hymns are too often not “phrased,” or laid out on the page, so that the meter of the lyrics is the main consideration. Compare the following lyrics, phrased to allow the complete thought, followed by the manner in which the lyrics are commonly arranged (whether to accommodate the music, or due to layout or printing concerns):

*Though my cross may be hard to bear, Though my life may be filled with care;  
 Though misfortune be mine to share—I'll never forsake my Lord.*

*Though my cross may be hard to bear, Though my life may be filled  
 with care; Though misfortune be mine to share—I'll never for-  
 sake my Lord.*

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<sup>58</sup> This memorable descriptive phrase is the product of Craig Roberts' fertile mind—as is much of the content of this section, derived from *A Good Hymn*, 27-30.

Or, consider this hymn in 7.8.7.5. meter.

*Lord, we thank Thee for the bread, And the cup from the nameless dread;  
Help us to discern our head; And remember Thee.*

*Lord, we thank the for the bread, and the  
cup from the nameless dread; Help us to dis-  
cern our head; and remember Thee.*

Again,

*Just as I am, though tossed about With many a conflict, many a doubt,  
Fightings and fears within, without, O Lamb of God, I come.*

*Just as I am, tho tossed about With many a  
conflict, many a doubt, Fightings and fears with-  
in, without, O Lamb of God, I come.*

Which of these phrasing arrangements puts the emphasis clearly on complete thoughts, allowing those who sing to contemplate the meaning of the hymn, rather than truncating the lyrics in incomplete, often confusing, thought patterns?

And how did this situation come to be?

***Hymns and Tunes.*** One function of a hymn with consistent meter is that it can be sung to any tune which fits that particular meter. This was one of the basic premises of the older “hymn and tune books.” Tunes were familiarly known by their names, so that by simply hearing a tune title (such as “Regent Square” or “Arlington” or “Pisgah”) called out, worshippers could recall a familiar tune, and match it to lyrics of the same meter. Thus, hymns might be sung to several different tunes (for example, “Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah”). Conversely, the same tune might be used to “carry” several different sets of lyrics. As examples, see, in *Hymns for Worship*, #80, “Father, Hear the Prayer We Offer” and #595, “Cross of Jesus, Cross of Sorrow;” or #543, “Great God of Nations,” compared with the much more familiar lyrics of “Just as I Am” in #330—both set to the same tune by William Bradbury.

***Appropriate Phrasing—or, Lyrics Taking Precedence Over Music.*** In 1855, the famous American preacher Henry Ward Beecher published *The Plymouth Collection of Hymns and Tunes; for the Use of Congregational Churches*. Reacting to what was seen as the over-use of choirs and other tendencies toward worship as performance rather than a more participatory

experience, Beecher attempted to encourage congregational hymn singing by “marrying” the words and the music, placing the lyrics inside the musical staff, as has been common ever since, even to the present time.<sup>59</sup>

As with many well-meaning plans, however, a “law of unintended consequences” took effect, so that most if not all hymnals consequently have allowed the music, rather than the phrasing of the lyrics, to govern their appearance. Partly, this is the result of the difficulties of typesetting or “engraving” musical notation across the page in a legible manner. The unfortunate result has been that, to accommodate such concerns, the most important part of the hymn—indeed, its signature feature, the lyrics—have been altered, omitted, hyphenated, and otherwise muddled.

While we can appreciate the need to take typesetting and engraving concerns seriously,<sup>60</sup> the five Senior Editors are united in our emphatic desire that, rather than force into a “cookie-cutter” mold all hymns of varying meter, phrasing, rhythm, or other individual characteristics of a particular hymn, we should allow the lyrics of a hymn to “drive” the phrasing, and therefore even the layout or the appearance of the hymn on the page.

***Complete Hymns, Expressing Biblical Thoughts.*** Often even well-known hymns have been shortened or otherwise overly-edited so that the very meaning of the original hymn or the intention of the hymn writer is obliterated. An example of this undesirable development is the omission in most modern hymnals of several “core” verses of the old hymn “Nearer, My God to Thee”—which has nothing to do with the sinking of the Titanic, and everything to do with Jacob’s dream in Genesis 28. We are making every effort to include in this hymnal a number of “missing verses” for hymns such as “God Be with You till We Meet Again,” or “In the Hour of Trial,” to cite only a few such examples.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> See William J. Reynolds, “Henry Ward Beecher’s Significant Hymnal,” *The Hymn* 52:2 (April 2001), 1724. For an interesting online account of this hymnal, and of Henry Ward Beecher, consult the following URL: [http://www.plymouthchurch.org/our\\_history\\_Hymnal.php](http://www.plymouthchurch.org/our_history_Hymnal.php).

<sup>60</sup> Especially is this true of Charlotte Couchman, who has done most of the work in the engraving process of producing the hymnal—a debt gratefully acknowledged by the other Senior Editors.

<sup>61</sup> See David Maravilla’s excellent expositions “Singing With the Understanding,” a regular feature *Truth Magazine*.

Of course, we also want to include older or contemporary hymns that emphasize complete biblical thoughts or concepts. We are looking for the “new hymn” that is reverent, singable by the congregation, poetic, and edifying by teaching or exhortation. As National Public Radio announcers frequently remind us, “All music was once new.” Several of the Senior Editors have, in fact, composed or written several new hymns.

### **Summary**

A Christian hymn is a lyric poem, reverently and devotionally conceived, which is designed to be sung and which expresses the worshiper’s attitude toward God, or God’s purposes in human life.<sup>62</sup> It should be simple and metrical in form, genuinely emotional, poetic and literary in style, spiritual in quality, and in its ideas so direct and so immediately apparent as to unify a congregation while singing it. Of course, it must be supported with music appropriate to the message, deemed pleasant to those who sing, and achievable by the average Christian.

The essential ingredients, then, of this definition are:

- a metrical poem
- reverent and devotional in nature
- poetic and literary in style
- spiritual in quality
- expressing the worshipers attitude toward God
- uniting the congregation which *sings* it.

As Senior Editors of this hymnal project, we recognize, possibly more than anyone else can, that we have a tremendous opportunity and responsibility to influence churches in our time, for good or ill. This work is not

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<sup>62</sup> I have shamelessly cribbed much of the concluding matter from an excellent presentation by Mark Coulson to our “Review Board” in Nashville, TN, 7 July 2006. This Review Board consists of more than thirty Christians around the country, including some who have extensive musical training, some who are proficient in the composition and revision of poetic lyrics, some with the computer skills necessary for the production of this hymnal and all its ancillary materials, and a number of excellent song leaders—who have often provided the most insightful critiques of what we have proposed. In short, we hope it is evident that we are employing every conceivable measure to produce a high-quality hymnal which will be useful in aiding modern Christians to worship God in song well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

about us, the editors, the reviewers, writers, composers, or musicians. It is about our service to the Lord.

Considering that future generations—our children and grandchildren—will be influenced to faithfulness and praise for the Lord by the use of vital hymns, we have embarked prayerfully and carefully upon this endeavor, and ask the assistance and prayers of all Christians everywhere that it may prove beneficial to the cause of Christ.

## **A Hymn Bibliography: An Initial Attempt, With Many Omissions**

**by Steve Wolfgang**

Although I have dabbled in the resources of the British Library in London, the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh, the National Library of New Zealand at Wellington, the Australian National Library (Canberra), and the State Libraries of New South Wales (Sydney), Queensland (Brisbane), and Victoria (Melbourne), this bare beginning of a bibliography concentrates largely, though not exclusively, on North American resources.

### ***Databases:***

*American Protestant Hymns Databank*, Stephen Marini, Wellesley College (100,000+ hymn texts)

*Dictionary of North American Hymnology: A Comprehensive Bibliography and Master Index of Hymns and Hymnals Published in the United States and Canada, 1640-1978* (CD-ROM produced by the Dictionary of American Hymnology Project, Oberlin College)

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*Hymn Society of America Database*, Mary Louise VanDyke, Oberlin College

*Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals—Hymn Database*, Edith Blumhofer and Mark Noll, Wheaton College

Temperley, Nicholas, Charles G. Manns, and Joseph Herls. *The Hymn Tune Index: A Census of English-Language Hymn Tunes in Printed Sources from 1535 to 1820*. 4 vols.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

**Hymnal Collections:**

1. Library of Congress—ca. 17,500
2. Emory University, Atlanta—15,000+
  - ✓ Incorporates Hartford Seminary collection of 8700 hymnals
3. Princeton Theological Seminary—ca. 12,500
4. University of Kentucky—10,000+
  - ✓ Wilcox & Lair Collections - 5,000+ uncatalogued

**Other Useful Collections:**

- ✓ Southern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Louisville—4,500
- ✓ Lexington Theological Seminary  
Disciples of Christ—ca. 2,000
- ✓ Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY  
Methodist, Wesleyan, Holiness—ca. 2,000
- ✓ Centre College, Danville, KY  
Presbyterian—ca. 1,000

*Source:* Tina Schneider, *Hymnal Collections of North America* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2003).

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