

**ROUND AND THROUGH
THE WESLEYAN HYMN
BOOK**

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Round and Through the Wesleyan Hymn Book by J. Ward

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WESLEYAN HYMN BOOK.

BY THE
REV. J. WARD.

O COME, GLAD PRAISES RING
TO THE EVERLASTING KING;
SING TO THE LORD, AND SHOUT WITH GLAD ACCLAIM!
FOR GOODLY 'TIS AND SWEET,
OUR GOD WITH PRAISE TO GREET;
AND PRAISES WELL BEFIT THE ALMIGHTY NAME.
MANT.

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P R E F A C E .

THE Writer of the following pages has long thought that a cheap little hand-book, comprising information on the rise, formation, authorship, and other historical particulars connected with the Wesleyan Hymn Book, was greatly needed by the masses in Methodism. It is an admitted fact that the Methodist people generally know but very little about a book which they greatly love, and which is in constant use amongst them. Tens of thousands of them have no other idea but that John Wesley wrote all the hymns, whereas only about five or six of them are known to have been written by him, along with twenty-six translations. Others have supposed them to be the joint productions of Messrs. John and Charles Wesley, whilst in fact a hundred and fifteen are from the pens of other authors, of which number ten belong to Dr. Doddridge, and sixty-six to Dr. Watts.

The writer is not unmindful of the existence of such works as Burgess' Hymnology; Kirk's Original Titles; Heaton's Lectures; Christopher's Hymns and Hymn Writers: yet, valuable and interesting as these all are, they do not realize what is required by the individuals just alluded to,—the humbler classes of our people. Not

only are some of them too expensive and elaborate, but wanting also in adaptation to the class of readers we have named.

The design of this hand-book is to help such persons to a more profitable use of our incomparable hymns, as well as a more intelligent and devout appreciation of their worth. No attempt has been made to criticise the literary merits of the Hymn Book, or to alter or amend any of its contents; such an effort would be altogether apart from the object sought to be attained, which is simply and solely to assist the humbler portion of the Methodist people to understand the circumstances which placed in their possession a book, which, next to the Bible, they love and prize above all others; a book which has refreshed and cheered, by its inspiring strains, many a weary way-worn christian.

If this production should in any measure tend to interest and profit God's people, the writer will feel compensated for his toil, and will rejoice that he has been the means of elevating in their esteem those precious hymns, compared with which, "Italian trills are tame."

In working out this design he purposes, according to the title, to go ROUND the Hymn Book by sketching its history, and THROUGH it by describing its contents. And may the blessing of God rest upon the endeavour.



ROUND AND THROUGH
THE WESLEYAN HYMN BOOK.

SINGING is an exercise in which the heart of man finds a ready and joyous utterance. The power of song is felt and acknowledged by all people. "The man that makes the ballads of a nation," says a celebrated writer, "need not care who should make its laws." If, as has been often said, friendship is the "wine of life," and variety is the "spice of life," so singing is the "charm of life," as one of the poets has truly said,—

"Of all the arts beneath the heaven,
That man hath found, or God hath given,
None bears the human soul away,
Like the sweet strains of melody."

Like many other good things, singing has been greatly abused and turned to the most unworthy purposes. Whilst angels use it to pour

forth their adorations, the sons of belial employ it in carnal revelry and bacchanalian strains.

When the great Creator of all things fastened the foundations of the earth, and laid the corner stone thereof, the heavens became vocal with His praise, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." One of the most rapturous and inspiring representations of the heavenly world is that which sets forth the songs of the redeemed. Saint John beheld in apocalyptic vision, the glorified hosts standing on a sea of glass, having the harps of God in their hands, whilst they "sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." In the temple worship of the Jews singing formed a distinguished part of their devotions, and all the world is invited to join them in this high and holy service in the following words, "Make a joyful noise before Him all ye lands, serve the Lord with gladness, and come before His presence with singing. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise, be thankful unto Him, and bless His Name." The christian church has not been unmindful of its benefits, but has in various ways consecrated her sweetest and sub-

limest strains to the worship of God and the service of religion. In the earliest period of the church's history we find singing not only practised and tolerated, but positively enjoined. When our Lord and His disciples partook of the first eucharistic feast they closed the service with a hymn of praise. "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives." In the prison at Philippi, Paul and Silas sang praises to God at midnight. One of the apostolic injunctions was, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." St. James says, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms." Singing is in perfect harmony with the genius and spirit of the christian religion. An eloquent writer has said, "To other and higher distinctions of christianity as a system of worship must be added that it is pre-eminently the lyrical religion of the world. Discord and silence divide all others between them. But the christian sings. To him this is so natural, and, indeed, so necessary an act as to be quite

beyond the range of sanction and apology. Indeed, apart from all precedent, a faith which is itself the harmoniser of the discordant elements of life can have no other than a tuneful utterance."

The practice of singing hymns and psalms was continued in the church immediately succeeding the Apostolic age. Pliny, a Roman historian, who flourished at the end of the first century, in a letter which he addressed to the emperor Trajan, describes the christians as "assembling together before daylight, and singing a hymn of praise to Christ as God." Tertullian, one of the christian fathers, who lived in the latter part of the second century, when speaking of the manner in which the Lord's supper was administered, says, "After water is brought for the hands, and lights, we are invited to sing to God according as each one can propose a subject from holy scripture, or his own composing." Saint Augustine, who flourished about the end of the third century, describes the influence of christian psalmody in his day. He says, "The hymns of the church moved my soul intensely; the truth was distilled by them into my heart; the flame