

**ANGLICAN HYMNOLOGY: BEING AN  
ACCOUNT OF THE 325 STANDARD  
HYMNS OF THE HIGHEST MERIT  
ACCORDING TO THE VERDICT OF THE  
WHOLE ANGLICAN CHURCH. [1885]**

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Anglican Hymnology: Being an Account of the 325 Standard Hymns of the Highest Merit According to the Verdict of the Whole Anglican Church. [1885] by Rev. James King

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**REV. JAMES KING**

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# Anglican Hymnology

*BEING AN ACCOUNT OF THE 125 STANDARD HYMNS  
OF THE HIGHEST MERIT ACCORDING TO  
THE VERDICT OF THE WHOLE  
ANGLICAN CHURCH*

BY

REV. JAMES KING, M.A.

AUTHORISED LECTURER TO 'THE PALESTINE EXPLORATION FUND'  
VICAR OF ST. MARY'S, BERWICK-UPON-TWEED

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## INTRODUCTION.

IN the English language there are about *twenty thousand* hymns and versions of the Psalms—composed almost entirely during the last three hundred years, by fifteen hundred authors. The greater number of these hymns are poor when judged by the ordinary laws of sacred poetry, and the compilers of Church Hymnals have no easy task in making judicious selections from the vast stores of hymnology. Many hymns of little intrinsic merit have obtained an undue notoriety, either from some happy associations, or from the excellent music to which they have been wedded ; and considerable diversity of opinion exists with respect to the relative merits of hymns in general.

If a hundred persons were each to write a list of a dozen favourite hymns, the probability is that no two lists of the hundred would be alike ; so greatly is each individual influenced by natural temperament, education, and associations. Amid

much diversity of individual opinion, however, there is a general agreement as to what constitutes real excellence, and the verdict of the whole Church, could such be determined, may be accounted a safe guide in deciding the question of relative merit. In order to find out the verdict of the whole Anglican Church, the writer adopted the following method. He collected and collated with much labour fifty-two representative Hymnals used in the Church of England at home and abroad. These included Hymnals of the Scottish Episcopal, American, and Colonial Church in communion with the Anglican. They also in due proportion represented the various parties in the Church—namely, the Ritualistic, High, Broad, and Evangelical. All the fifty-two have, moreover, been published, with one exception, within the last twenty-one years, extending from 1863 to 1885—that is, during the lifetime of all who have now attained their majority, and consequently they represent the taste of the present generation.

By means of these Hymnals he put to the test all hymns of acknowledged merit, in order to find out those that have received what has been aptly called 'the broad seal of approval of the whole Anglican Church.'



The fifty-two were regarded as a committee, each member of which could, as it were, give one vote for each approved hymn. Thus, if a hymn was found in fifteen Hymnals, then it was credited with fifteen votes or marks of approval; if found in twenty Hymnals, twenty marks; if in thirty Hymnals, thirty marks; if in fifty Hymnals, fifty marks; and so on.

For instance, taking a few well-known hymns commencing with the letter A as the initial letter of the first line, the question was asked—How many of you have 'Abide with me, fast falls the even-tide'? Forty-nine answer, 'I have.' This hymn was therefore credited with forty-nine marks, because it was found in forty-nine books.

The six best-known hymns in A, after being duly tested, are found to stand in the following order of merit:—

<i>Order.</i>	<i>Hymns.</i>	<i>Marks.</i>
1.	All praise to Thee, my God, this night,	51
2.	Abide with me, fast falls the even-tide,	49
3.	Awake, my soul, and with the sun,	49
4.	All people that on earth do dwell,	44
5.	All hail, the power of Jesus' Name,	37
6.	As with gladness men of old,	34

Perhaps a dozen individuals would have arranged the above hymns in a dozen different

ways; but it must be admitted that, as regards authority, the verdict of fifty-two representative Hymnals towers high above individual opinion, inasmuch as they represent the voice of the whole Anglican Church.

Two thousand of our best-known hymns have thus been tested, and those that have obtained most marks have been selected and classified on the following principle:—

1. All hymns found in thirty Hymnals and upwards have been classified as *first rank* hymns.
2. All hymns found in twenty Hymnals and upwards, and in fewer than thirty, have been classified as *second rank* hymns.
3. All hymns found in fifteen Hymnals and upwards, and in fewer than twenty, have been classified as *third rank* hymns.
4. All hymns found in fewer than fifteen Hymnals have been regarded as not having received the general approval of the Anglican Church.

According to this principle 105 hymns were found to be entitled to be placed in the first rank, 110 in the second rank, and 110 in the third rank; making a total of 325 approved by the voice of the whole Church of England.

These 325 standard hymns have been arranged in order of merit, according to the marks of approval awarded to each; and it is interesting

to notice the relative position assigned to the universal favourites.

It is startling to find that of the twenty thousand hymns existing in the English language, not a single one is to be found in all the fifty-two Hymnals, and it is somewhat remarkable that only 325 are found in fifteen Hymnals and upwards.

Many excellent hymns have doubtless failed to attain even to the third rank, simply because they lack age. As a general rule, a period of time from twenty to fifty years is required before a hymn becomes adequately appreciated and finds its way into our modern Hymnals.

A list of thirty hymns of comparatively recent date is given on pp. 310, 311. These hymns are rapidly finding their way into modern Hymnals, and in the future they will probably take rank as 'standard hymns.'