

**ANNOTATIONS OF THE HYMNAL:
CONSISTING OF NOTES,
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF
AUTHORS, ORIGINALS AND
REFERENCES**

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Annotations of the hymnal: consisting of notes, biographical sketches of authors, originals and references by Charles L. Hutchins

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CHARLES L. HUTCHINS

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BY THE

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PREFACE.

SEATING myself at my table to write some prefatory pages to the following annotations, my eyes chance to rest upon two or three scores of Hymnals, and works upon Hymnody, arranged along my shelves. As I think of the many wise (and some unwise) thoughts expressed in those volumes, and of similar thoughts scattered through many other books around me, it seems superfluous—a work of supererogation—for me to say what I had intended, and what I rather want to say; and I will forego my purpose. My silence shall be wiser than my speech. And in place of what I proposed saying, I will give—and this does not require an apology but will receive thanks from all who read these pages—some most thoughtful words from two gifted hymnologists, who are well qualified, in every way, to speak upon this subject.

But first, I may with propriety remark, that the substance of these annotations has been in the course of preparation about two years. With an apology for referring to any other work of my own, I would say, that nearly two years ago, after the publication of my "*Church Hymnal*," I determined to revise and enlarge it, if the General Convention should not adopt an authorized Hymnal. In the work of selecting hymns, I could fix upon no better principle to guide me than that of the popularity or general acceptance of hymns, in the Christian Church. It seemed to me that for most of our hymns, this would be the best practical test. I say *most* of our hymns, for there are many, of recent composition, or of recent translation from other tongues, that can have this test applied to them in but a limited degree. By this course, it could be pretty well ascertained what hymns had received the general approval and sanction of the Church. Personal tastes concerning some hymns, would have, not seldom, to be sacrificed to this test, but the result it was thought, would be satisfactory. Accordingly, I examined all the standard Hymnals within my reach, making such notes as would be of service, and such a

selection of hymns as would, I thought, be acceptable to our Communion. In the end, however, it was not necessary to set forth the result of my labours in a revised Hymnal, for our highest ecclesiastical legislative body, at its recent Council, adopted a book, which was alone authorized for use in the Church. Since the adoption of the new Hymnal, I have continued and extended these annotations, with reference to the authorized book, thinking that they might be of interest to many who will use the Hymnal, and perhaps of a little service in considering the merits of a collection which is, in a sense, but tentative.

I had been engaged in making these annotations a few months when I received (in the winter of 1870) a copy of Bickersteth's "*Hymnal Companion to the Book of Common Prayer*," and I was gratified that the principle which I had adopted, had been acted upon by the accomplished hymnologist and poet whose compilation, it seems to me, is not excelled by any in use in the Church of England.

In another place, I give a list of most of the works consulted in the preparation of this volume. And here I must be permitted the privilege of making my most sincere acknowledgments to the Rev. F. M. Bird, of Spotswood, N. J., for the constant assistance he has given me in these annotations. Of that gentleman's gifts in hymnology, the beautiful and exhaustive volume entitled "*Songs of the Spirit*," recently published, is ample evidence. Those who are acquainted with his hymnologic attainments will justify me in applying to him a remark he has made concerning another, viz.: "His large collection of hymn-books, and his marvellous acquaintance with hymnology, render him the indispensable helper of all hymn collectors who would have their work well done."

With these prefatory explanations, I beg to call the reader's attention to the following remarks on "Hymnody," by Sir Roundell Palmer, at the Church Congress at York, 1866; and the no less valuable remarks of Earl Nelson, at the Church Congress at Nottingham, in 1871.

From the Paper of Sir Roundell Palmer.

The object of hymnody, although its use is variable and discretionary, is, of course, not merely to afford relief during the pauses of a more serious duty: it is in itself, when rightly understood and applied, an act of worship of the highest, heartiest, and most intelligent kind. "I confess," said Richard Baxter, "that harmony and melody are the pleasure and elevation of my soul, and have made a psalm of praise in the holy assem-

bly the chief delightful exercise of my religion and my life, and hath helped to bear down all the objections which I have heard against church music." To give it this character, the choice of hymns ought to be made upon the principle that their matter and words are of cardinal importance; the music being accessory to the sense, and chosen with a view to give it lively and harmonious expression. When "praises" are "sung with understanding," it is not only a fit utterance of the higher spiritual emotions to "a mind in tune," with the "powers in vigorous exercise," the "thoughts bright and intense," and "the whole soul awake" (words which I have adopted from Simon Browne);—it is not only a powerful instrument for the education, direction, and development of those emotions, in a mind less active and mature; but it is very often a key by which the inner meaning and spiritual application of Scripture and of its language and imagery is opened and made practical to simple people, far better than by expositions or commentaries. The opinion, which once prevailed, that nothing but psalms taken directly from Scripture ought to be sung in the congregation, was narrow and groundless; but the substance of Scripture, assimilated and made part of the spiritual life, has always supplied the principal matter for the best hymns; and this may explain why excellent hymns have been written by persons who have given no proofs of skill in any other kind of poetry. Religious enthusiasm, fed by the poetry of inspiration, grows like that which it lives upon, and reflects the warmth and light which it could not have originated.

If a hymn ought to be the expression of lively apprehensions of spiritual things, and of genuine religious emotions and aspirations, in the mouth of the worshipper, it is evident that it must have come, with these characters, fresh from the heart and mind of the person who wrote it. To be "recited with rapture" (I again use the words of Simon Browne), ought it to be "written under a kind of inspiration." Whatever detracts from this, mars its effect. And, for this reason, it ought not to be vulgar, prosaic, or didactic; it should be high in tone, simple and pure in taste and feeling, and not without some touch of the fire and energy of poetry.

From these premises I draw certain conclusions.

My first conclusion is that a healthy natural taste is more to be trusted in the composition and selection of hymns than technical rules, supposed to be derived from antiquity, or from the criticism of the works of other ages. The ancient hymn-writers did not, in fact, work by such rules: their manner was natural, and suitable to their time: but it does not follow that it should be a law to ours. A passage is sometimes quoted

from S. Augustine, in which he speaks of a hymn as a "song of praise to God;" and this definition has been offered as one of the tests by which all hymns ought to be approved or rejected. But what can be the value of a definition which would exclude every hymn of which the spirit is supplication rather than praise? I know not whether this rule is supposed to require that a hymn should assume the form of a direct invocation or address to God; yet I am at a loss to understand on what other ground Addison's hymn, "*The spacious firmament on high*," can have been thought to offend against it, by a learned writer in the *Quarterly Review* of January, 1862; who adds, "if it is poetry, it is certainly not song; yet has been brought, by old associations, into many hymn-books." For my own part I fervently hope that it may always remain there. Praise to God as glorified in His works, is the substance and essence of every part of that hymn, as it is of the beautiful verses of the 19th Psalm on which it is founded. If it be not poetry, I do not know what is; and to prove that it is song (and soul stirring song too) it is only necessary to hear it (as I often have) heartily sung to an appropriate tune.

Another arbitrary rule (also advocated by considerable authority) condemns the use, in hymns, of the singular pronouns "*I*" and "*my*," instead of the plural "*we*" and "*our*," as "inconsistent with the united song of a congregation looking "God-ward," and opposed to the spirit of the early Church. Such a point ought to be determined by reason, not authority: and I cannot find for it any good reason. Private meditations, which express the circumstances, experiences, or emotions of particular persons, in a way distinctively applicable to those individuals, are (of course) not appropriate for public use. But, if an act of praise or worship, suitable for the participation of Christians in general, takes form naturally as the song of an individual soul "looking God-ward," its simultaneous adoption and application to himself by every member of a congregation makes it as much "the united song of the congregation" as if it were conceived in the plural. A congregation is the aggregate of a number of individuals: it cannot "look God-ward," except through those individuals. The essence of public Christian worship consists in the combination of the separate devotion of each particular person present, with the sense of Christian brotherhood, binding them all together. The *Quarterly Reviewer*, for reasons not satisfactory to my mind, thinks the incorporation of the Psalms of David, and other Scripture-songs, (which generally run in the first person singular,) into both Jewish and Christian worship, irrelevant to this question. But the first person singular is also used in

the Apostolic and Nicene Creeds; which, in the public services of the Church, are hymns of the most solemn kind, and embody the common profession of faith of the whole congregation; and the *Te Deum*, although expressed (down to the last verse) in the plural, ends with a petition in the singular number. This rule (like the former) tends to proscribe most supplicatory hymns. Such hymns as "*Rock of Ages, cleft for me;*" "*When I survey the wondrous Cross;*" "*Jesu, Lover of my soul;*" "*My God, my Father, while I stray;*" "*Nearer, my God, to Thee;*" "*Abide with me, fast falls the eventide;*" Ken's morning and evening hymns; and Keble's "*Sun of my soul, Thou Saviour dear,*" are proved, by the common assent of most of our churches, to be fit for united song by the congregation; yet the singular form is as proper and necessary in them as the plural can possibly be in others. Even with respect to antiquity, a canon which would condemn the "*Dies Irae*" does not seem to me to be entitled to very profound veneration.

My next conclusion is, that good native English hymns are, generally speaking, to be preferred to translations properly so-called. It is the peculiar defect of metrical translation that it cannot give the natural manner, or the real mind, either of the author or of the translator. It is a curious exercise of art, not a spontaneous production. It moves in fetters: it is compelled to find substitutes (for want of precise equivalents in different languages) for the finer touches, which give colour and character to the original. Under the exigences of verse and rhyme, it is alternately diluted with expletives, and starved by arbitrary compression. It aims at being a copy, under conditions which make complete success impossible.

These observations apply, with especial force, to metrical versions of the Psalms; which are, perhaps, of all compositions, the most unfit for such treatment. No one can read the prose translations of the Psalms in our Bibles and Prayer Books, without feeling their extreme power and beauty; no one can pass from them to the "Old" or "New" Version, or to any other of the numerous similar attempts, without perceiving that (with very rare exceptions) the power and beauty are gone; that the watersprings have dried up, and the fruitful land has become barren. Not only the authors of the "Old" and "New" and Scotch Versions, but Sir Philip Sidney and his sister the Countess of Pembroke, Milton in his boyhood, Wither, Sandys, Sir John Denham, John Keble, and many more, have tried what could be done, upon the principle of a strict and full adherence to the Hebrew sense. It is not too much to say, that all of them have failed. From the collective results of their labours it would be difficult to