

Glory in the highest, I will shout and sing!

Christian Hymnody, United Methodism and Eastern Pennsylvania

Joseph F. DiPaolo

Among the people of God, refreshing movements of the Spirit have always been accompanied by marvelous outbursts of song. In the Scriptures, we find that singing occurs at critical moments in the unfolding history of God's saving acts: from the Song of Moses commemorating the liberation of Israel from bondage (Exodus 15), to the Song of Mary at the birth of Jesus (Luke 2), to the hymn sung by Jesus and his disciples in the upper room as their last act together, before he left for the Mount of Olives and his betrayal (Mark 14:26, Matt. 26:30). A similar pattern emerges in church history as well, and no wonder; for singing has a way of touching the deepest chords within, lifting us up above the petty and the pedestrian, and reminding us of beauty, truth and the higher things that beckon to us amid the frenzy of our fractured lives.

It should be no surprise, then, that among the people called United Methodist of Eastern Pennsylvania, we discover many men and women moved by God's Spirit to respond to the invitation of Psalm 98:1, to "Sing to the Lord a new song!" These songs often were new in style and approach, and yet celebrating themes that were old and familiar: the grace of God, the power of God to save and to keep, the promises of God to make all things new – old themes made new and fresh, because these were *their* songs, reflecting *their* experience of new life in Christ. And in many cases, their songs are still *our* songs today. Our study will be comprised of three parts: first, a general overview of Christian hymnody; second, an account of American hymnody with special attention to United Methodism and Eastern Pennsylvania; finally, a survey of the hymns and hymn-writers of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference.

I. General Review of Hymnody

The Early Church

As the outgrowth of Biblical Judaism, the early Christian movement inherited a rich musical tradition. It is clear that many of the Psalms were sung at Temple worship by choirs, accompanied by instruments, and chanted by priests and people in a responsorial fashion.¹ The early believers in Jesus, as Jews,

¹Among Psalms that are accompanied by instructions for the "Director of Music" with tune names are Psalm 22, "The Doe of the Morning;" Psalm 45, "Lillies;" and Psalm 75, "Do Not Destroy." Psalm 136 is an example of a Psalm designed for responsorial use in worship, with the refrain "His love endures forever" repeating every other line.

naturally continued the practice of singing the Psalms, which would have been their primary source for praise. They soon added their own compositions to reflect the new reality they had experienced in Christ, but these, too, would be patterned on the Psalms.² In the New Testament, we find hymns and songs, notably those connected with the nativity account in Luke: Mary's Song (*Magnificat*, Luke 1:46-55, United Methodist Hymnal 199), the Song of Zechariah (*Benedictus*, Luke 1:69-79, UMH 208) and Simeon's Song (*Nunc Dimittis*, Luke 2:29-32, UMH 225). In addition, scholars agree that there are portions of hymns embedded in the writings of the New Testament, now usually set off in printed Bibles as poetry. An example is found in Ephesians 5:14, where the author clearly seems to be quoting familiar verse to his readers: "That is why it is said:

Wake up, O Sleeper,
rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you."³

Spontaneous singing and prayer is depicted in the Book of Acts (16:25), and Paul counseled his readers to "let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." (Colossians 3:16; see also Ephesians 5:14).

During the first three centuries before the peace of Constantine, little is known about early Christian songs and styles of worship, because of the illegal and underground status of the Church. That they sang, however, is clear. An important early reference is found in a letter to the Roman Emperor Trajan, dating to about 110 AD, from Pliny the Younger, Roman Governor of Bithynia. Amid his description of early Christian practices is the statement that "they usually met before light on an appointed day to utter in turn songs to Christ as to a god..."⁴ Early Christian sources that attest to the singing of hymns and psalms include Clement of Alexandria (c.150-c.215) and Tertullian (c.160-240).

The earliest Christian hymn of which we have the full text dates to the third or perhaps even second century, and is described by St. Basil about 370 AD as "well known" in his day. A Greek hymn called *Phos Hilaron* (Cheerful Light), a version of it may be found in the UMH Hymnal, 686, as "O Gladsome Light."⁵

²According to a standard reference book on hymnody, "The Psalms are the base upon which all subsequent church song has been built." Harry Eskew and Hugh T. McElrath, *Sing With Understanding* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1980), 72.

³1 Timothy 3:16 appears to quote an early creedal hymn, and the book of Revelation is laden with hymnic passages.

⁴David W. Music, *Hymnology, A Collection of Source Readings*. (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 1996), 4.

⁵For a translation said to "preserve the stresses and rhythm of the Greek original," see Erik Routley, *Christian Hymns Observed* (Princeton: Prestige Publications, 1982), 8.

From Constantine through the Middle Ages

Only during the fourth century, following Constantine's legalization of Christianity, does a clearer picture of hymnody's early development emerge, and we find that congregational hymn-singing makes its first clear appearance amid conflict. This was the era of the great Christological controversies sparked by Arianism and its denial of the divinity of Jesus Christ. Orthodox views upholding both the true humanity and full deity of Christ were defined and established through ecumenical councils at Nicea (325) and Constantinople (381).

This was a controversy debated and battled in the streets, barber shops and marketplaces, often in ugly ways; orthodox bishop Athanasias was exiled from his episcopal see five times and blood not infrequently flowed. As the dispute raged, both sides took to song, and it seems that the Arians were first to employ music as a weapon. After they were prohibited by Emperor Theodosius from holding public worship in Constantinople, the Arians began marching through the streets at sunset singing hymns and songs of their own. St. John Chrysostom (c.345-407) soon organized rival processions featuring doctrinally orthodox hymn-singers.⁶ A familiar hymn which originated during this time of conflict was written by Aurelius Clemens Prudentius (c.348-413), and is in our hymnal as "Of the Father's Love Begotten" (UMH 184), which clearly reflects the desire to teach and reinforce right doctrine about the divinity of Christ.

The key figure for hymnody of this period, however, is Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (c.340-397), who wanted ordinary Christians to sing in order to reinforce doctrinal understanding and commitment, especially regarding the Trinity. In his *Confessions*, Augustine relates, "In the church of Milan... all sing together with great earnestness of voice and heart." A hymn composed by Ambrose is in our hymnal as "O Splendor of God's Glory Bright." (UMH 679). Ambrose is credited with introducing "office hymns," that is, hymns designed to be sung at certain stages of the church's worship.

Ambrose wanted to discipline the practice of hymn-singing, bringing its



St. Ambrose

⁶Erik Routley, *Hymns and Human Life* (London: John Murray, 1952), 20-21. A prayer of John Chrysostom is found in the UM Hymnal (412), requesting (among other things) "in this world a knowledge of your truth."

more exuberant expressions into better line with orthodox doctrine, and under the auspices of church leadership. He adapted his hymns to the meter of military marching music, standardizing a format of four-line stanzas of eight syllables in each line that is still known as “Ambrosian Meter.” This is the first time (of which we have knowledge) that congregational hymn-singing is encouraged and directed by the church hierarchy. In a real sense, therefore, Ambrose is the father of congregational song, and in this early stage of the development of hymnody, we find in bold relief the three essential functions of hymn-singing which remain today. The first is to codify, defend and teach doctrine, especially in a controversial context. In a manner not wholly dissimilar to that which lay behind the creation of creeds, hymns often have been composed with an eye cocked toward one’s theological opponents. One thinks of Augustus Toplady’s “Rock of Ages” which actually was written as part of his polemic against Wesleyan theology. And as a vehicle of teaching doctrine, no one did it better through hymns than Charles Wesley. A second purpose behind hymn-writing is to unify and fortify the body. Few things create bonds between people as powerfully as music commonly held and expressed, especially in times of conflict. This truth has never been lost on national and military leaders, though it has sometimes been forgotten in the life of the Church Militant. And finally, a third essential function of hymnody, of course, is to glorify God.

Ironically, the very desire to combat heresy and reinforce doctrine which introduced hymn-singing among the people soon led to its suppression. People began composing and teaching hymns with questionable theological content. The leadership, therefore, began to proscribe the use of composed hymns in public worship, as early as the Council of Laodicia, in the late 4th century (c. 467). Though Laodicia was a local council without universal jurisdiction, nonetheless, canons passed there demonstrate the mood and direction of the church hierarchy:

- Canon 15: No others shall sing in the Church, save only the canonical singers who go up into the ambo and sing from a book...
- Canon 17: The Psalms are not to be joined together in the congregations, but a lesson shall intervene after every Psalm...
- Canon 59: No Psalms composed by private individuals nor any uncanonical books may be read in the church, but only the Canonical Books of the Old and New Testaments.⁷

For a thousand years, hymn-singing as we now know it – that is, congregational singing – disappeared from the official worship life of the church. During the long medieval period, the role of the laity was to participate passively in the Mass, with singing provided by professional musicians, priests and choirs. Subsidiary to the Mass was the monastery, wherein members of the

⁷Music, 18.

order (the “religious”) would participate in regular, daily acts of worship known as the “offices,” during which scriptures were read, psalms recited and chanted, and “office hymns” sung. It was in this monastic context that another great strain of church music developed, called Plainsong. Attributed to Pope Gregory I (“the Great,” c.540-704), it is commonly known as Gregorian Chant. Plainsong is modal, without harmony, and flexible in rhythm, essentially emulating natural speech patterns. An example of plainsong that has been adapted for congregational singing is “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” (UMH 211).

Among other developments during this period were the “sequences,” which began as melodic flourishes on the last syllable of liturgical Alleluia, but later detached, evolving into free-standing compositions, with themes appropriate for particular feast-days. There were also monks who composed devotional poetry, without intending that they be sung in worship, but which later would be adapted for that purpose. An example is “Jesus the Very Thought of Thee,” (UMH 175), dating to the 12th century and attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux. Peter Abelard (1079-1142) wrote a number of hymns for the convent to which his beloved Heloise belonged, including “O What Their Joy and Their Glory Must Be” (UMH 727). In the 13th century, in response to a request by Pope Urban IV, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) wrote three pieces, which became the only hymns incorporated into the Mass before the Reformation.

None of this was hymn-singing in the sense that we think of it today, that is, singing during worship by laity. During that long millennium, however, the laity did sing. Popular culture during this period of Western Christendom was permeated with religious conviction, and it was inevitable that songs and poetry developed outside the official worship life of the church would reflect popular piety. Songs composed in the vernacular (or in a mix of vernacular and Latin), were sung, especially around holidays and festivals, the most familiar being the Christmas carols, many of which are still with us today. Within the Roman Catholic Church, it would not be until Vatican II in the 1960s that Catholics would officially be encouraged to sing hymns during Mass, and a new era of Roman hymn- writing and singing would be born.⁸

⁸There were, in the intervening centuries, Roman Catholics who wrote hymns, and even private Diocesan hymnals produced for the people’s use, though Vatican I (1870) clamped down on such irregularities. See Routley, 1982, 87-90. Among familiar hymns of Roman origin are those of Frederick Faber (1814-1863), “There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy” (UMH 121) and “Faith of our Fathers” (UMH 710; ironically this was written as a battle cry to reconvert England to Rome; its third verse, extolling Mary, is omitted from Protestant Hymnals). Popular post-Vatican II Catholic hymns include “Here I Am, Lord” (UMH 593) and “One Bread, One Body” (UMH 620).

In the eastern, Greek-speaking church, hymnody similarly was limited to the professional class, though several hymns connected with eastern liturgy or poetry are well known today in translation, including “Come, Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain” (UMH, 315), and “Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence” (UMH, 626). Routley, 1982, 13.

The Reformation and Beyond

Congregational singing as we know it today was conceived amid the fire and smoke of the Reformation, and was delivered by the hands of that complex genius, Martin Luther (1483-1546). Luther began several revolutions; a spiritual one came in the wake of his rediscovery of grace, and insistence upon the doctrines of *sola gratia*, *sola fide* and *sola scriptura*. He contributed to cultural and linguistic revolutions by translating the Bible and adapting the Roman mass into German. And he began a musical upheaval by introducing hymns and congregational singing. The latter reflected Luther's emphasis on the priesthood of all believers, prompting him to involve the laity in worship as much as possible.

Luther understood the power of music to reinforce doctrine and unify the people amid controversy. No wonder a 16th century critic said, "Luther has damned more souls with his hymns than with his sermons." For his part, Luther wrote, "I ...wish that we had as many songs as possible in the vernacular which the people could sing during Mass... For who doubts that originally all the people sang these which now only the choir sings?"⁹ Music in the Mass previously the province of the choir, such as the *Gloria*, the *Sanctus* and the *Agnus Dei* were made the property of the congregation – and new compositions were added. In 1524, Luther published a collection of hymns for use in worship and at home, consisting of four tunes and eight hymn texts, four of them written by Luther himself. He wrote some 37 hymns in all, the most familiar being *Ein Feste Burg* ("A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," UMH 110). An explosion of hymnody resulted in the composition of some 25,000 hymns in Germany by 1618.¹⁰

The other great pole-star of the Reformation was John Calvin (1509-1564), who also influenced the development of church music. It has been said while Luther fought his way out of the medieval church, Calvin thought his way out. Rigorous in his application of reason and discipline, Calvin was not content to adapt inherited forms of worship, but re-thought and refashioned all. Like Luther, Calvin believed the laity should sing. Unlike Luther, he prohibited hymns (and, for that matter, choirs, instruments and the use of harmony). A thoroughgoing understanding of human depravity led Calvin to be suspicious of hymns of human composition, concerned that these would inevitably be flawed theologically and misleading spiritually. Only the words of Scripture, which were without flaw, should be sung in public worship. In Geneva, only Psalms and other appropriate texts (e.g., the Lord's Prayer) were sung. Successive

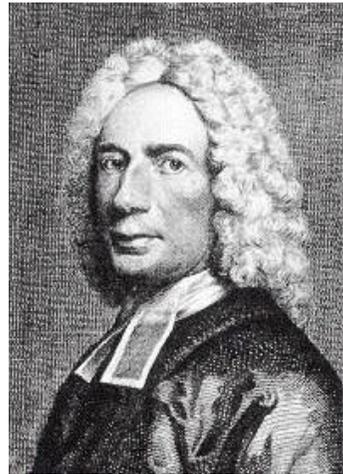
⁹Quoted in Young, 7.

¹⁰Eskew & McElrath, 92. Luther was not the first to protest medieval Church practices, and had been foreshadowed by earlier reformers, such as Wycliffe and Hus. Indeed, followers of Hus, the Moravians, published the first collection of hymns on the European Continent in 1501, two decades before Luther (to those early Moravians we owe the tune to the hymn "Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above" UMH 126). But it was Luther who made the revolution in theology and hymnody stick.

editions of the Genevan Psalter were issued between 1539 and 1562, when it contained metrical versions of all 150 Psalms and various canticles. Echoes of Calvin's Geneva resound in our churches every week to this very day, as it was from the Genevan Psalter that we have been bequeathed the most familiar tune setting for the doxology, "Old One Hundredth" (UMH 95).¹¹ Indeed, when the Reformation crossed the English Channel, it would be Calvin, not Luther, whose approach would set the direction of English hymnody.

English Hymnody

The Reformation came to England by way of King Henry VIII, whose first twenty years of rule were so loyal to Rome that he received the title "Defender of the Faith," but whose marital aspirations ran afoul of the pope. Wanting Roman liturgy but not Roman discipline, Henry broke away in 1532 to create the Church of England. Initially, Roman worship patterns were replicated, with the people's participation extended only to the canticles and other parts of the mass sung by the choir. The expansion of church singing can be attributed to Henry's daughter, Mary Tudor, whose attempt to reestablish Roman Catholicism in England resulted in many English Protestant leaders fleeing to Geneva, where they imbibed the spirit of Calvin and his metrical Psalter. The powerful spirit of Puritanism insured that only Psalms and canticles would be sung in public worship in England and Scotland for generations. Indeed, until 1820, the singing of hymns was legally prohibited in the Church of England,¹² though by then they had made inroads into many parish churches, mainly as a result of the inspired work of three men: Isaac Watts, John Wesley and Charles Wesley.



Isaac Watts

¹¹Also known as "All People that on Earth Do Dwell," the tune was the setting for 25 Psalms in the 1560 Geneva service book, including Psalm 100. It was called "Old" 100th because of its inclusion in the "old" English Psalter of 1562 by Sternhold and Hopkins, as opposed to the "new" Psalter of 1696 by Tate and Brady. Another Genevan Psalm-tune still used today is "Old 124th." See Young, 196-197, and Routley, 1982, 19.

¹²A celebrated church trial in 1820 occurred when Thomas Cotterill, vicar of St. Paul's, Sheffield, produced a hymnal for his congregation to use (he was aided with the editing by hymn writer James Montgomery, author of, among others, "Angels From the Realms of Glory," UMH 220). Legal action brought by congregants resulted in a decision in Cotterill's favor by Archbishop Vernon Harcourt, and thus "opened the way for the flowering of Anglican hymnody in the nineteenth century." Routley, 1952, 80-81.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748) has been called the “father of the English hymn.” A Calvinist by both upbringing and conviction, Watts was dissatisfied with the poor quality of the Psalter, and the absence of any Christian content to the Psalms. He set about writing hymns of his own, publishing a first collection in 1705. In all, Watts is credited with writing more than 750 hymns, including setting most of the Psalms into meter (some into more than one), and with liberating church music for the English-speaking world. As heir to the Calvinist stream of hymnody, many of Watts’ hymns stick closely to the Psalms, adding Christian content. Descriptive of his method is the title of his 1719 collection, *The Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament*, which contains some of his best known works, such as “Jesus Shall Reign,” based on Psalm 72 (UMH 157), and “Joy to the World,” based on Psalm 98 (UMH 246). The hymns of Watts continue to enjoy great popularity for their power to evoke awe and wonder over the gospel proclamation of an incarnate God laying his life down for a sinful humanity:

Alas and did my Savior bleed, and did my sovereign die?
 Would he devote that sacred head for such a worm as I?...
 Well might the sun in darkness hide, and shut its glories in,
 When God, the mighty maker, died for man the creature’s sin.¹³

If Watts was the vehicle for the transforming the Calvinist hymnic tradition after its migration to the British Isles, it was the Wesley brothers who imported and made new again the German Lutheran and Pietistic traditions. John Wesley’s influence was felt through his translation of German hymns and a lifetime of publishing hymnals, while that of Charles was, of course, through his compositions, perhaps 8,000 in all. The hymns of Charles Wesley constitute a major compendium of theology set to music. Singing among Methodists was not only an expression of praise, but also a pedagogical tool, teaching and reinforcing doctrine, as in the familiar, “Hark the Herald Angels Sing” (UMH 240), with its celebration of the incarnation:

Christ, by Highest heaven adored,
 Christ, the Everlasting Lord;
 Late in time behold him come,
 Offspring of the Virgin’s womb.
 Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
 Hail th’ incarnate deity,
 Pleas’d as man with men to dwell;
 Jesus our Emmanuel.

¹³UMH 294. There the words are changed to “Would he devote that sacred head for sinners such as I;” and “for his own creature’s sin.” Eleven Watts texts are in the UM Hymnal, several of which appear again under a different tune or with added refrain.

The Wesleys are credited with inventing the evangelistic hymn, as well as introducing another major theme to mainstream hymnody: Christian experience. In contrast to the hymns of Watts, which were more “objective” in portraying the wondrous deeds and attributes of God, the Wesley hymns were more personal and introspective, emphasizing (as did their theology) the felt experience of God’s grace. Thus, while Watts may be considered the father of the English liturgical hymn, Charles Wesley is the father of the devotional hymn. A beautiful example is “Come, O Thou Traveler Unknown” (UMH 386), based on the story of Jacob wrestling with God in Genesis 32, which Isaac Watts praised as “worth all the verses he himself had written:”



Charles Wesley

Yield to me now, for I am weak,
But confident in self-despair!
Speak to my heart, in blessing speak,
Be conquered by my instant prayer.
Speak or thou never hence shall move,
And tell me if thy name is Love.
'Tis Love! 'tis Love! Thou died'st for me,
I hear thy whisper in my heart.
The morning breaks, the shadows flee,
Pure universal Love thou art!

Between them, Watts and the Wesleys began a hymnic revolution which, through the agency of the 18th century Evangelical Revival, soon made its way into the worship life of the British people, in both Anglican and independent churches, and inspired other great hymn-writers whose works are still with us today, such as William Cowper (“There is a Fountain Filled with Blood,” UMH 622), Edward Perronet (“All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name,” UMH 154) and, of course, John Newton (“Amazing Grace,” UMH 378).¹⁴

¹⁴The completion of that hymnic revolution came in the wake of the 19th century ‘English Counter-Reformation,’ called the Oxford Movement. Liturgical and dogmatic concerns led to the recovery and translation of ancient Greek and Latin hymns (such as “Christ is Made the Sure Foundation,” UMH 559, and “All Glory, Laud and

II. American Hymnody, Methodism and Eastern Pennsylvania

In America, congregational singing followed the pattern inherited from Great Britain, and at first was entirely limited to the Psalms and canticles. Indeed, the very first book printed of any kind in the English-speaking colonies was *The Whole Booke of Psalms Faithfully Translated into English Metre*, commonly known as the Bay Psalm Book, published in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1640.

The psalms were sung to tunes inherited from England as well, though by the late 1700s, the singing school movement had led to the composition of new tunes for the Psalter. Singing schools began in early 18th century New England to improve the quality of congregational song by teaching the people to read music. The first standard tune book for Psalm-singing in America was *An Introduction to the Singing of Psalm-Tunes*, published in 1721 by John Tafts. By the century's close, tune books were used in homes and churches, standardized in an oblong-shape, containing musical instruction and a collection of tunes. The oldest hymn-tune composed in the United States still widely used today is CORONATION, usually set to "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" (UMH 154), and first printed in *Union Harmony or Universal Collection of Sacred Music* (Boston: 1793). Until well past 1850, tune books typically contained music and only a sample text, while Psalters and hymnbooks contained text only.

It is worth noting that the German hymn tradition was imported to these shores quite early, and the Philadelphia area in particular became home to several German pietist sects. The "Hermits of the Wissahickon" settled in what is now Roxborough in 1694, led by Johannes Kelpius, who composed a book of hymns between 1698 and 1708. An offshoot of the Hermits established the Ephrata Cloister Community in 1735, under the leadership of J. Conrad Beissel, who composed over 400 hymns, printed in both Ephrata and Philadelphia. The music of the Moravians traveled with them to Philadelphia and Bethlehem, where members began settlements a few years after their first New World landing in Savannah (coming ashore with John Wesley in 1737).¹⁵ These early German groups, however, did not have any abiding influence on American hymnody until later, when efforts among their heirs coalesced with developments among the English-speaking population, for whom church music first began taking new directions during the First Great Awakening of the mid-18th century.

Honor," UMH 280), as well as the composition of new ones ("Holy, Holy, Holy," UMH 64). Hymnals began to take their now-familiar shape with both words and music on the same page, and hymn-texts became more wedded in the popular consciousness to particular hymn-tunes. See Routley, 1982, 53-58, especially on the influence of the 1861 hymnal, *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, in normalizing having tunes and texts together.

¹⁵See Robert A. Gerson, *Music in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Theodore Presser Co., 1940), 3-8.

The First Great Awakening and Hymns

The First Great Awakening was a spiritual revival that swept through the colonies in the decades preceding the Revolution, creating cultural and spiritual patterns that remain with us today. Leaders of the movement included Jonathan Edwards, William Tennent and, of course, George Whitefield (1714-1770), in whose person Methodism arguably made its first impact on American soil. Though a Calvinist theologically, the heart of Whitefield's Methodism was, like that of Wesley, the call to the warmed heart: to the personal experience of God's redeeming love and assurance in Christ, accompanied by a heartfelt pursuit of holiness.



George Whitefield

Whitefield in particular was the primary catalyst for the spread of the Great Awakening through the colonies, as he traveled and preached from Maine to Georgia. With his emphasis upon the new birth experience, Whitefield's message was widely embraced across lines of race, gender, denomination and class, providing a common religious identity that became a critical foundation for the political unity later forged in the American Revolution. Music played an important part in Whitefield's ministry; in his published journal, he mentions singing psalms or hymns, and occasionally quotes at length from hymns written or translated by the Wesleys. Describing the effect of Whitefield's preaching in Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin wrote that "one could not walk thro' the town in an evening without hearing Psalms sung in different families of every street."

In Philadelphia in 1740, Whitefield engaged Andrew and William Bradford to reprint the 1739 London edition of *Hymns and Sacred Poems* of John and Charles Wesley. Philadelphia, therefore, can lay claim to being the birthplace of the Methodist hymnal.¹⁶ On the title page of Whitefield's reprint is the line "sold for the Benefit of the Poor in Georgia." Whitefield worked primarily among reformed Congregationalists and Presbyterians, who had a strong bias against "man-made" hymns in favor of the Psalter. Yet the colonial revival already had excited enough interest in evangelical hymnody that he thought could generate profits from its sale to support his orphanage in Georgia. Indeed, by 1742 Jonathan Edwards reported that his Northampton, Massachusetts congregation (where Whitefield had preached) sang the hymns

¹⁶Francis Tees, et. al. *Pioneering in Penn's Woods: Philadelphia Methodist Episcopal Annual Conference Through One Hundred Fifty Years* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Conference Tract Society, 1937), 15. The Bradford firm was Philadelphia's first printing company.

of Watts almost to the exclusion of the Psalter. It is noteworthy that this embrace of evangelical hymns was a bottom-up, rather than a top-down development, representing “America’s first popular revolt against established form in religion,” a recurring pattern that is distinctly American.¹⁷

By the time organized Methodism was established in the 1760s and 1770s, hymn singing was popular and widespread. John Adams, writing in 1774, commented on the emotional quality of the singing he heard on a visit with the Methodist society of St. George’s in Philadelphia, calling it “the finest music I have heard in any society except the Moravians, and once in a church with an organ.”¹⁸ Eastern Pennsylvania played a pivotal role in hymn publishing among early Methodists as well. In October 1769, the society at St. George’s paid Philadelphia publisher George Dunlap to print “four hundred hymns,” which turned out to be Charles Wesley’s *Hymns for the Nativity of Our Lord*. The next year, Dunlap reprinted Wesley’s 1753 *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*. Both evidently were commissioned by early itinerant Robert Williams.¹⁹ After the establishment of the Methodist Publishing House (then called the Book Concern) at St. George’s in 1789, successive editions of the enormously popular *Pocket Hymn-Book* were published, first by John Dickens in 1789 or 1790, and later by Ezekiel Cooper.²⁰

The Second Great Awakening and the Spiritual.

The next great transforming moment in American hymnody took root in the early 1800s, during the Second Great Awakening, resulting in that uniquely American contribution to church song: the spiritual. Born amid the setting of the early frontier and the emotive context of early revivalism, the spiritual was “something new, something American, something that had no counterpart in European Protestantism.”²¹

At first they were not called spirituals, but “spiritual songs,” recalling Paul’s triad in Colossians 3:16 of “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.” Psalms, of

¹⁷Don Yoder, *Pennsylvania Spirituals* (Lancaster: Pennsylvania Folklife Society, 1961), 4. The first American publication of the hymns of Watts was in Philadelphia in 1729 by Benjamin Franklin, who reprinted the *Psalms of David*. It is interesting to note that Isaac Watts texts comprise about half of John Wesley’s *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns* published in Georgia in 1737. Though not widely used by Wesley or anyone else, Wesley’s was the prototype of the English-language hymnal in America.

¹⁸Quoted in Gerson, 17.

¹⁹Tees, 48, and Young, 91; Melchoir Steiner reprinted three Wesley collections for St. George’s in 1781: *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (1753), *Hymns for those that seek and those that have Redemption in the Blood of Jesus Christ* (1747) and *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns* (1741).

²⁰See Emory S. Bucke, gen. Ed., *The History of American Methodism*, 3 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1964. I:271-281, 285.

²¹Yoder, 1. The author has been told by Philadelphia Boys’ Choir Director Robert Hamilton that around the world, the spiritual is one of the two most requested forms of music (the other is the Broadway show tune).

course, referred to the Psalter, and hymns to original compositions. But while the hymn is more formal and set, the product of an evangelist or inspired writer, the spiritual was freer, more fluid and emotive, and more fully the property of the people. It is religious folksong, less literary, and more a living, oral tradition. According to one scholar “the spiritual represents an Americanizing, a frontierization – even (if you prefer) a ‘hillbillyizing’– of American hymnody.”²²

The genre typically is divided into white spirituals and black spirituals. White spirituals (then often called “camp meeting songs” or “camp meeting choruses”) are rooted in 18th century evangelical hymns, the hardships and folk music of the frontier and, possibly, a work song tradition imported from England’s laboring class.²³ An example of the white spiritual is “On Jordan’s Stormy Banks I Stand” (UMH 724). Black spirituals, which were called “plantation melodies” or “slave songs,” had their origin in the harsh conditions of slavery, and the memory of their African musical heritage. Examples include “Were You There” (UMH 288) and “There is a Balm in Gilead” (UMH 375).

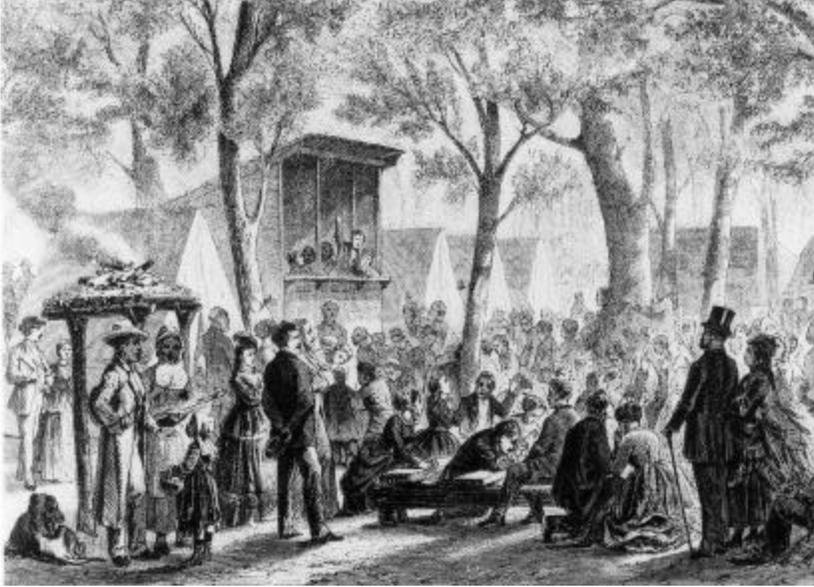
For decades, scholars have debated whether black spirituals developed from white, or white from black, and the answer is unclear. What is clear is that there was much cross-fertilization between black and white traditions as they mingled together in the experience of frontier revivalism, especially through the agency of the camp meeting. Camp meetings were large, outdoor evangelistic gatherings that brought people together for preaching, singing and social interaction – the latter an especially important function for people living in sparsely populated areas. Camp meetings had their origin in the 1790s, and became enormously popular during the Second Great Awakening. That African-Americans and whites attended these meetings together is well documented, and different versions of the same songs have been identified as part of the oral traditions of both groups. By 1810, the greatest number of free blacks in America resided in the region extending from the Philadelphia area down to Baltimore, including the Delmarva Peninsula, territory covered by the Philadelphia and Baltimore Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and this region became a focal point for the transfer of spiritual and musical patterns.²⁴

Spirituals typically consisted of a simple, rhythmic repetition of three or four lines, often emotionally charged, easy to remember, and centering on such themes as conversion, joy in the Lord, or the trials and triumphs of the pilgrimage. They might be sung in a call-and-response pattern, with the people

²²Ibid., 8. In evidence again is that distinctly American pattern of a movement upward from the people, rather than downward from established authorities. Indeed, though enormously popular among Methodists (who dominated early revivalism) spirituals were never included in any official hymnals until past the mid-20th century.

²³John F. Garst, “Mutual Reinforcement and the Origin of Spirituals.” *American Music* 1986, 4 (4): 396-7.

²⁴Yoder, 20-21. It is no coincidence the oldest black denominations had their start in this same area.



An image of an early American camp meeting

answering with a chorus to a leader singing out lines from a hymn, or made up on the spot. Another pattern was the so-called “wandering chorus” where a familiar chorus might be attached or interwoven into any number of hymns. Among African-Americans, this is sometimes called “blackening” a hymn. An echo of the wandering chorus pattern in our hymnal is the text of Isaac Watts’ “Alas and Did My Savior Bleed” (UMH 359) to which is appended the chorus:

As the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away.
It was there by faith, I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day.²⁵

People naturally brought back to their churches the tunes and texts they learned at camp meetings, along with the spontaneous, folksy styles of worship, so that by the mid-19th century, so-called “shouting Methodism” had become commonplace – even “old-fashioned Methodism.”²⁶ Songbooks were published in great numbers to capture the music and teach it to the people. One

²⁵I call it an “echo” because the refrain now seems to be a part of the hymn, and doesn’t do much wandering in Methodist worship today. It also bears a much later date (1885) than the early heyday of choruses.

²⁶Ironically, some early itinerants were not fond of the new exuberant styles of worship, preferring the “old-fashioned” Methodism of the founding generation, which sang the imported evangelical hymns of Wesley, Watts et. al. See Yoder, 6-7, 24-27

of the earliest was published in Philadelphia by Richard Allen (1760-1831), first black preacher to be ordained in the United States (by Francis Asbury), and founder of the AME Church. In 1801, while his Bethel church was still somewhat connected with the Methodist Episcopal Church, Allen edited and published *A Collection of Hymns and Spiritual Songs Selected from Various Authors*, for the use of his congregation. The collection of 54 hymn-texts is the first published by and for African-Americans in the USA, and contains hymns by Watts, Wesley and the other evangelical authors, but also contains variations on these hymns in the form of simplified wording, and wandering choruses.²⁷

Another important early songbook assembled in Eastern Pennsylvania was *Wyeth's Repository of Sacred Music, Part Second*, published in 1813. John Wyeth (1770-1858) lived in Harrisburg and Philadelphia and, though a Unitarian, was interested in folk music across denominational lines. Among the tunes first preserved by Wyeth still sung are MORNING SONG, associated with the hymn "O Holy City Seen of John" (UMH 726), and NETTLETON, the familiar setting for "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing" (UMH 400).

Yet a third kind of Spiritual, identified by folk scholar Paul Yoder, is the Pennsylvania Spiritual, or Pennsylvania Dutch Spiritual. These were songs in the revivalist tradition that took root among German-speaking sects that were so anchored in eastern and central Pennsylvania, such as the Evangelical Association, the United Brethren and a variety of other denominational offshoots. Early camp meetings were not only bi-racial and interdenominational, but in Pennsylvania they also could be bi-lingual, and as the Pennsylvania Dutch mingled with the poor whites and blacks, a German-language counterpart to the spiritual was born. Many of the simple rhythmic choruses and hymns with choruses were translated, and soon enough original compositions were added.

A key figure in this process was early itinerant John Walter (1781-1818), a native of Quakertown, Bucks County, and member of one of the first classes organized by Jacob Albright, founder of the Evangelical Association. In 1801, Walter began traveling with Albright, and as the first preacher so enlisted was called the "first co-laborer." In Reading in 1810, Walter assembled the first hymnbook of any kind for the Evangelicals, entitled *Eine Kleine Sammlung alter und neuer Geistreicher Lieder* [*A Brief Collection of Old and New Spiritual Songs*]. Among its 56 texts are English hymns he translated into German, plus his own compositions. Among Walter's hymns are the two most popular Pennsylvania Dutch spirituals composed in America, still known among German speaking groups: "Kommt Bruder, kommt, wir eilen fort," ["Come Brethren, Come, We'll Journey On"] and "Wer will mit uns nach Zion gehen?" ["Who will go with us to Zion?"]. Walter wrote both the text and the music for "Kommt Bruder, kommt" while he and a group of fellow preachers were caught in a snowstorm attempting to cross the Allegheny Mountains on a missionary thrust:

²⁷Young, 23-24 and Garst, 392, 397.

Come brethren, come, we'll journey on,
 To the New Jerusalem;
 Oh! See you not the golden gates,
 That just before you gleam?

Unto that goal direct your eyes,
 Hold Jesus' faithful word.
 Keep watchfulness and prayer in mind,
 So the Journey wont be hard.

Here is a mighty wilderness
 Through which we all must go,
 Here taste the heavenly manna sweet,
 O! then no murmur know

Soon we shall land on Jordan's stream,
 That by the city glides,
 Who keeps the faith shall safely cross,
 For him the stream divides.²⁸

Chorus:
 In the rest, in the rest,
 Oh heaven's sweetest rest;
 I'll wait for the day when
 my Savior comes,
 And then I'll go home to
 my rest.

Another important hymn collection with roots in Eastern Pennsylvania was compiled for Methodist Protestant Church by Thomas H. Stockton, who had been born and raised in Philadelphia and was a member of old St George's. His father, William, was editor of the *Wesleyan Repository*, the primary organ of the reform movement in the 1820s that ultimately led to a split, and the creation of the Methodist Protestant Church. The younger Stockton became an ordained minister, remembered as a dynamic preacher and a poet who composed hymns and texts. In 1837, Stockton edited the first hymnal for the MP Church.²⁹

The Gospel Song and Eastern Pennsylvania

The next major transforming moment in American hymnody occurred in the latter half of the 19th century with the birth of the gospel song and the beginnings of gospel music, descendants respectively of the white and the black spiritual. The transformation of the white spiritual into the gospel song was prompted in no small part by socio-economic factors. By the 1870s, the churches steeped in revivalism had experienced significant growth in numbers, status

²⁸This translation is from A. Stapleton, *Flashlights on Evangelical History* (York: For the Author, 1908), 188-189. The full German text is in Yoder, 354-355. In his 1810 hymnbook was Walter's translation of Isaac Watts' "My God, the Spring of All My Joys," which was used in many subsequent German language hymnals. Before Walter's book, the Evangelicals used German Lutheran and Reformed Hymnals.

²⁹See Edward J. Drinkhouse, *History of Methodist Reform*, 2 vols. (Baltimore: Board of Publication, Methodist Protestant Church, 1899), 2:500-501. The MP Church reunited with the northern and southern branches of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1939.

and wealth. Clergy were becoming more educated (even seminary-trained), simple “meeting houses” being replaced by gothic stone structures and worship styles becoming more formal. Even camp meetings became gentrified. The movable, frontier-style encampment was giving way to the summer religious resort on a permanent site. Camps in Eastern Pennsylvania at Landisville (1867) and Chester Heights (1872), or those dotting the Jersey shore (the “Methodist Riviera”) such as Ocean Grove (1869) and Ocean City (1879), offered Christian alternatives to secular sites like Coney Island and Atlantic City.

As early as the 1850s, discomfort among socially aspiring Methodists led to increasing discomfort over the singing of camp meeting songs in worship. On the Phoenixville-Charlestown Circuit in 1858, the preacher recalled that the Phoenixville Church had the largest and most “intelligent” congregations, due to the prosperity brought by the local iron works. “There were several brethren who were exceedingly opposed to the singing of any but Church Hymns and more especially Choruses.”³⁰ Hence the development of the gospel song, which retained the evangelical fervor and the high emotional quality of the spiritual, but in a more ‘correct’ musical form, and laden with Victorian sentimentality and flowery language. Another distinctive of the Gospel Song is that its chorus is integrally related to the song itself, in contrast to the spiritual tradition, where the chorus could “wander” from hymn to hymn. In the words of one scholar, “Gospel-Song is to spiritual as the gingerbread-laden, scrollwork happy Victorian ‘mansion’ is to the frontier log cabin.”³¹

Pennsylvania became the seedbed for the Gospel Song movement, with many of its leaders hailing from the Keystone State, including Philip Bliss (1838-1876), John R. Sweney (1837-1899) and Ira Sankey (1840-1908), who did so much to popularize the genre as song leader for evangelist Dwight L. Moody. A competition ensued between official denominational hymnals and a raft of gospel songbooks and hymnals published by a new breed of independent, entrepreneurial authors, who copyrighted their materials. The years following the Civil War saw an explosion of such publications, and many of them were rooted in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference.

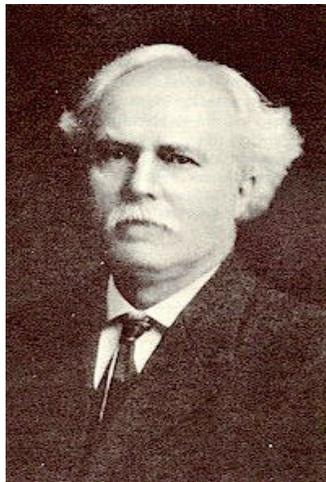
Isaiah Baltzell (1832-1893) was among the first and most prolific writers of Sunday school music and gospel songs in the United Brethren Church. Converted at a camp meeting in Maryland and ordained in 1850, he served his first churches in Virginia and Maryland. From 1862 until his death, he served in Eastern Pennsylvania, including churches at Reading, Harrisburg, New Holland and Lancaster. He also served as a presiding elder and a general conference delegate. His first book of hymns, *Revival Songster*, was published in

³⁰Quoted in Yoder, 139. In urban centers, churches that had a more educated audience resisted using spirituals and camp meeting tunes in worship even in the early days, sticking to the older evangelical hymns.

³¹Ibid., 423.

Baltimore in 1859, and his second, *Choral Gems*, in 1871. Baltzell began his own publishing business, issuing dozens of songbooks, and operating a business, at least for a time, out of a building on West King Street in Lancaster. He also wrote a number of hymns which enjoyed great popularity for a time, including "No Room in Heaven," "Go, Wash in the Stream," and "At the Cross I'll Abide." Baltzell died in 1893 while serving a fledgling congregation in Pottstown, which later completed its sanctuary and named it Baltzell Memorial.³²

Another United Brethren publisher and composer was Edmund S. Lorenz (1854-1942), who grew up in Ohio, and was educated at Otterbein University, Dayton's Union Seminary, Yale and the University of Leipzig, Germany. In 1887 he came to Eastern Pennsylvania to become president of Lebanon Valley College, a post he held two years. While in Annville, his health gave way (it was never very good thereafter), prompting him to turn his full attention to music, which previously had been only an interest. He edited several songbooks with Isaiah Baltzell, including *The Master's Praise: A collection of Songs for the Sunday School* in 1892, and founded a music publishing company in 1890. Today the Lorenz Corporation, based in Dayton, remains family-owned, and is one of the nation's



Edmund Lorenz

leading publishers of church music. Edmund wrote a number of hymns and tunes that continue to be published, including the music to "The Name of Jesus," in Abingdon's *Songs of Zion* (48), and his best known, "Tell it to Jesus:"

Are you weary, are you heavy-hearted?
Tell it to Jesus, tell it to Jesus.
Are you grieving over joys departed?
Tell it to Jesus alone.

Chorus: Tell it to Jesus, tell it to Jesus,
He is friend that's well known
You've no other such a friend or brother,
Tell it to Jesus alone.³³

³²Jacob H. Hall, *Biography of Gospel Song and Hymn Writers*. New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1914 (AMS Press Reprint, 1971), 115-117; and Phares D. Gible, *History of the East Pennsylvania Conference of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ*. (Dayton: The Otterbein Press, 1951), 420, 452.

³³Hall, 319-322. The text is often attributed to J.E. Rankin, but various sources indicate that Lorenz wrote it originally in German, and Rankin translated it.

Among the Methodists, William J. Kirkpatrick (1838-1921) came to Philadelphia in 1854 to study music and carpentry, and in 1855 joined the Wharton Street ME Church. There he came under the tutelage of A. S. Jenks, who in 1858 had published an enormously popular chorus-book.³⁴ Kirkpatrick was soon employed by Jenks to edit another collection of hymns, and in 1859 published his first book, *Devotional Melodies*, at the age of 21. After a brief stint in the Union Army as a fife major, Kirkpatrick returned to Philadelphia, working for a time in the furniture business, but continuing to devote himself to music, studying composition, organ and voice, and serving as organist and music leader for the Ebenezer and Grace ME Churches of Philadelphia. Over the years Kirkpatrick collaborated on more than a hundred songbooks, and wrote scores of hymns, gospel tunes and choir anthems, publishing many of them under his firm, the Praise Publication Company of Philadelphia. His best-known works are the tunes to the songs "Jesus Saves," "Lead me to Calvary," (in Abingdon's *Songs of Zion* 45), and above all, "Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus" (UMH 462).³⁵

Another Philadelphia Methodist who wrote hymns and published music was J. Lincoln Hall (1866-1930), a layman and a member of the 7th Street



J. Lincoln Hall

Methodist Episcopal Church (now Mid-Town Parish). The best-known hymns for which Hall composed the music are "Does Jesus Care?," "He is Mine" and "Mine, Still Mine." In 1895, Hall and Irvin H. Mack founded the Hall-Mack Company, which became a leading publisher of church songbooks, cantatas, pageants and sheet music. His songbooks, especially *Songs of Faith and Triumph*, became popular supplements to denominational hymnals. Hall was a leader in area Methodism, serving three times as a General Conference delegate, as songleader for camp meetings at Rawlinsville, Landisville, Chester Heights and Ocean Grove, and as president of Pitman Grove (New Jersey) Camp Meeting Association. Among those who spoke and sang at Hall's December 1930 funeral was

³⁴Jenks and D. Gilkey edited *The Chorus, Or, A Collection of Choruses and Hymns, Selected and Original. Adapted Especially to the Class Room, And to Meetings for Prayer and Christian Conference*. Don Yoder, 386, calls it one of the "two most important English-language spiritual collections issued in Pennsylvania in the 19th century." The other was J. Gladding's *The New Camp-Meeting Lyre; or, A Collection of Hymns and Spiritual Songs, Suitable to be Sung at Camp-Meetings, During Revivals of Religion and on Other Occasions* (Philadelphia, 1857), which was distributed and sold by the Philadelphia Conference Tract Society.

³⁵Hall, 155-160, and Young, 782.

Homer Rodeheaver, who had risen to fame as song leader for evangelist Billy Sunday, and who ran his own music publishing company in Chicago. In fact, in 1937, Hall-Mack merged with the Rodeheaver Company, and in 1969, Rodeheaver Hall-Mack was absorbed by Word Music, which today is one of the nation's leading suppliers of church music.³⁶

Isaac H Meredith (1872-1962) was born in Norristown and grew up in the Oak Street ME Church. His brother, Rev. B. F Meredith, was instrumental in Isaac's coming to personal faith in Christ at the age of 13. Isaac was a gifted musician who began playing the organ professionally at the age of 12, and as a teenager sang for prisoners at the county jail each Sunday for several years. In 1891, while vacationing in Ocean Grove, he was enlisted to play the organ and sing a solo at an evening service. He was so well received that he soon embarked on a career in music ministry, touring with a variety of well-known evangelists, including R. A. Torrey. Meredith composed the music for more than a thousand songs, and in partnership with Grant Tullar, began a publishing firm based out of New York City, the Tullar-Meredith Company. During World War I, he served in Europe with the YMCA, and worked as music director for a variety of Methodist Churches in New York and New Jersey.³⁷



I. H. Meredith

Gospel Music and Eastern Pennsylvania United Methodism

The transformation of the black spiritual into gospel music followed a pattern similar to that of the white spiritual. After the Civil War and the end of slavery, black spirituals continued to be sung by the common folk in the fields and churches of the south, but as increasing numbers of African-Americans began aspiring to new levels of education and achievement, and migrating to

³⁶*The Methodist*, 4 December 1930. Information on the Hall-Mack Company was obtained from Gerson, 341, Hall, 389-391 and a phone conversation on 21 August 2003 with N. Bruce Howe, Jr., 83, of Warsaw, Indiana, who worked for Rodeheaver Hall-Mack for 45 years. Howe personally knew both Homer Rodeheaver and Irvin Mack. Rodeheaver Hall-Mack closed both its Philadelphia and Chicago branches in 1941, moving to Winona Lake, Indiana to set up shop at Rodeheaver's Westminster Hotel on April 30 of that year. Mr. Howe also said that the primary motivation for Rodeheaver's purchase of Hall-Mack was to obtain copyright to the song "In the Garden."

³⁷Hall, 405-407, and www.cyberhymnal.org.

urban centers for work, the spiritual began to change, or even decline in favor of the more established, evangelical hymns of Watts, Wesley et al.³⁸

In the 1870s, black spirituals came to the attention of the wider society and became a permanent part of American culture through performances of the Fisk Jubilee Singers of Fisk University (Nashville), who adapted spirituals to European musical patterns, and toured throughout the United States. These were “concertized spirituals,” with arrangements and harmonization that made them enormously popular, but only approximated the way the songs originally had been sung. By the early 20th century, as blacks began pouring into metropolitan areas, the old spirituals were no longer as appealing, and soon new forms of that singing tradition developed among storefront churches as “essentially the sacred counterpart of the city blues, sung in the same improvisatory tradition with piano, guitar or instrumental accompaniment.”³⁹

The towering figure in the development of American Gospel music was Charles Albert Tindley (1851-1933), ordained Methodist minister and member of the Delaware Conference who served many years in Philadelphia. Born a slave near Berlin, Delaware, Tindley was an uneducated laborer when he became the janitor of a Methodist Church in Philadelphia named John Wesley Chapel in 1885. Influenced by the pastor, Tindley was converted to Christ, and determined to pursue an education, largely on his own. He eventually became pastor of that same church, which after phenomenal growth and the construction of a new building, was renamed Tindley Temple in 1924 to honor him.

Tindley composed more than 60 hymns, five of which are in the United Methodist Hymnal: “Nothing Between” (373), Stand By Me (512), “Leave It There” (522), “Beams of Heaven as I Go” (524) and “We’ll Understand it Better By and By” (525). His song “I’ll Overcome Some Day” was the basis of the civil rights anthem “We Shall Overcome.” To know Tindley’s story is to hear the words of his hymns with new ears:

Harder yet may be the fight; right may often yield to might;
Wickedness a while may reign; Satan’s cause may seem to gain.
There is a God that rules above, with hand of power and heart of love;
If I am right, he’ll fight my battle, I shall have peace some day.
I do not know how long ’twill be, nor what the future holds for me,
But this I know: if Jesus leads me, I shall get home some day.

Tindley profoundly influenced Thomas A. Dorsey (1899-1993), who switched from vaudeville to writing and performing gospel, and whose influence was such that he has often been called the father of gospel music. But

³⁸The first published collection of black spirituals appeared in 1867, when William Francis Allen, Charles P. Ware and Lucy McKim Garrison released their *Slave Songs of the United States* (New York: A. Simpson and Co).

³⁹Eileen Southern, quoted in *Songs of Zion*, 172.

Dorsey, whose songs include “Precious Lord, Take My Hand” and “Peace in the Valley,” credited Rev. Tindley with being the father of the black gospel style, and his own personal inspiration.⁴⁰

III. Familiar Eastern Pennsylvania Hymn Writers and their Hymns

All of the well-known hymns written or composed by people from the predecessor bodies to the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church belong to the Gospel Song/Gospel Music period. They tend to emphasize evangelical themes of invitation to Christ, conversion and holy living, and are deeply emotive, often sentimental, reflecting on the believer’s personal struggles and triumphs, as well as the hope of eternal life.

John Hart Stockton (1813-1877) was born in New Hope, Pennsylvania, and was converted to Christ after attending a Methodist camp meeting near Paulsboro, New Jersey in 1832. He joined the New Hope ME Church in 1838, becoming a class leader in 1843 and a local preacher in 1846. In 1853, he joined the New Jersey Conference, serving until failing health compelled his retirement in 1872. Stockton was a leader in the holiness and camp-meeting movement, a founder of the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association (where a street is named for him) and preached with evangelist Dwight L. Moody. In the 1870s

Stockton published two volumes of original hymns, *Precious Songs* and *Salvation Melodies*. His best-known piece, for which he wrote both the words and music is the evangelistic hymn, “Only Trust Him” (UMH 337). A note of attribution missing from the UM hymnal is that Ira Sankey rewrote the refrain, which originally read “Come to Jesus, come to Jesus, come to Jesus, just now.” Sankey later wrote, “Believing those words had been so often sung that they were hackneyed, I decided to change them to tell them how to come to Jesus, by substituting the words, ‘Only Trust Him.’” Sankey’s use of the song in Moody’s evangelistic campaigns made it famous.⁴¹ Stockton also wrote many tunes, two of which endure today,



John H. Stockton

⁴⁰Ibid, 172, and Ralph Jones, *Charles Albert Tindley, Prince of Preachers* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982).

⁴¹Ira D. Sankey, *My Life and Story of the Gospel Hymns* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1906, 1907), 212-213; and *New Jersey Conference Minutes*, 1878, 59-61.

GLORY TO HIS NAME, the setting for Elisha Hoffman's "Down at the Cross," and GREAT PHYSICIAN, the music for William Hunter's hymn of the same name.

There was another hymn writer in the Stockton family, John's sister-in-law, Matilda (1821-1885), a Baltimore native who moved to New Hope in 1842, after her marriage to William C. Stockton. An advocate of the doctrine of "entire sanctification," Matilda claimed that soon after her conversion, she had a deeper experience of God's love, obtained "heart purity... and became free indeed." After William became a preacher with the New Jersey Conference, Matilda enriched his ministry with her own gift of song. Her hymn, "'Twas Love, 'Twas Wondrous Love," as found in a 1954 British Methodist hymnal, shows her emphasis on sanctification:

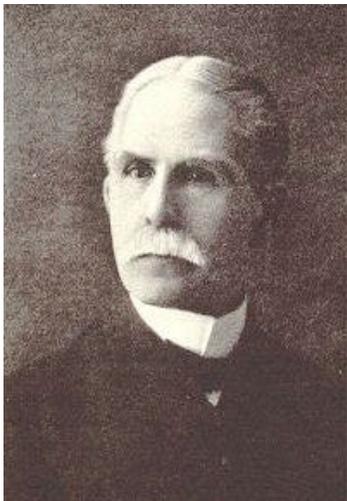
Love brings the glorious fullness in, and to his saints makes known
The blessed rest from inbred sin through faith in Christ alone...

Of victory now, o'er Satan's power, let all the ransomed sing,
And triumph in the dying hour, through Christ, the Lord, our King!⁴²

Elisha A. Hoffman (1839-1929) was born in the parsonage of the Orwigsburg Evangelical Church. His father, Rev. Francis Hoffman, was an honored member of the East Pennsylvania Conference for more than 60 years, and a five-time delegate to General Conference. The younger Hoffman was a graduate of Philadelphia's Central High School, and later attended Dayton's Union Seminary and was ordained. He worked with the Evangelical Church's publishing house for 11 years, and served congregations in Ohio, Michigan and Illinois, first with the Evangelicals and later in the Presbyterian Church. But his passion was putting gospel themes to music. He wrote and published more than 2,000 hymns, edited 50 songbooks and was the first music editor of the Hope Publishing Company, from 1894-1912. His wife, Susan Orwig, was the daughter of W. W. Orwig, a bishop and a hymnist himself, for whose family Orwigsburg had been named. Susan also wrote many poems, a number of which her husband published in his songbooks.⁴³ Elisha's songs emphasize classic evangelical and holiness themes. "Are You Washed in the Blood?" is a call to repentance and faith in Christ. His best known is "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms," (UMH 133) emphasizing assurance and peace in the Lord. In Abingdon's *Songs of Zion*

⁴²Matilda is buried beside her daughter Mary in the little church cemetery in New Hope where John's first wife is also interred. "She was a woman of strong faith... [who] never murmured, counting it a great privilege to witness to the power of Jesus to save to the uttermost." *New York Christian Advocate*, 26 November 1885.

⁴³Hall, 163-165, and Young, 133. A number of Susan Hoffman's poems are preserved in Stapleton's *Flashlights on Evangelical History*.



Elisha Hoffman

(number 34), his focus is on surrender and sanctification in the song, “Is Your All on the Altar?”

You have looked for sweet peace,
 and for faith to increase,
 And have earnestly, fervently prayed;
 But you cannot have rest,
 or be perfectly blest
 Until all on the altar is laid.

Chorus:

Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid?
 Your heart does the Spirit control?
 You can only be blest, and have peace and
 sweet rest,
 As you yield him your body and soul.

R. Kelso Carter (1849-1928) was a colorful character with an eclectic professional life. Born in Baltimore, he was a star athlete who graduated from the Pennsylvania Military Institute in Chester (now Widener University) in 1867. After graduation, he stayed on as an instructor, then as a full professor, teaching math, chemistry, natural sciences and engineering, and publishing a variety of works, both in his disciplines and works of fiction. He taught in Chester twenty years, except for three years he spent as a sheep farmer in California, a hiatus prompted by health problems. A spiritual crisis came in the wake of his return to the East Coast with his health still poor. He made a renewed commitment of his life to Christ, and experienced a healing. Soon afterward, in the fall of 1879 he left the Presbyterian church of his upbringing, and joined the Madison Street ME Church. In 1886, he and John R. Sweney co-published a songbook, *Promises of Perfect Love* (Philadelphia: John J. Hood), which included an original composition by Carter with military rhythms that reflected his many years at PMI, “Standing on the Promises of God” (UMH 374). In 1887, he left the Institute to go into the Methodist ministry, and became deeply immersed in the holiness and camp meeting movement, publishing a variety of writings on healing and sanctification. He later joined with A. B. Simpson, founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church, to co-edit a hymnal in 1891, *Hymns of the Christian Life*. In the latter part of his varied and versatile life, he took up the study of medicine, and ended up as a practicing physician in Baltimore.⁴⁴

⁴⁴Young, 729, cyberhymnal; and S. Olin Garrison, *Forty Witnesses* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1888).

C. Austin Miles (1868-1946) was educated at the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and the University of Pennsylvania, and initially pursued a career as a pharmacist. He was also a musician who for many years served as organist and choir director at the 7th Street ME Church in Philadelphia, where J. Lincoln Hall was a member. In 1892, he went to work for Hall as an editor and manager for the Hall-Mack Company. Miles was a popular song leader and choir director at camp meetings and conventions, and wrote a number of popular hymns, including "A New Name in Glory," "He is Mine" and "Win Them One by One." But his most beloved hymn by far is "In the Garden" (UMH 314), based upon the encounter between Mary and the Risen Christ in John 20, which he said came to him in a vision one evening, while sitting in his darkroom at home.⁴⁵

Rev. Frank E. Graeff (1860-1919) was a native of Tamaqua, Pennsylvania and joined the old Philadelphia Conference in 1890, serving its churches for 29 years as a pastor, and as the conference statistical secretary for more than a quarter of a century. He was a writer of children's stories, including a book that enjoyed some popularity, entitled *The Minister's Twins*, and a hymn writer, with more than 200 hymns published during his lifetime. It was during his pastorate at the Haws Avenue (Norristown) ME Church, from 1908 to 1912, that he passed through a period of personal and professional discouragement, inspiring him to write the words to his best-known hymn, "Does Jesus Care?"



Rev. Frank Graeff

Does Jesus care when my heart is pained
Too deeply for mirth and song;
As the burdens press, and the cares distress,
And the way grows weary and long?

Chorus: O yes, he cares: I know he cares.
His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,
I know my Savior cares.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Kenneth Osbeck, *101 Hymn Stories* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1982), 124; Young, 799.

⁴⁶The music for "Does Jesus Care?" (which does not appear in the UM Hymnal) was written by J. Lincoln Hall. Graeff is buried at Riverside Cemetery, Norristown. *Philadelphia Conference Minutes* 1920, 773-774.

William Gustavus Fischer (1835-1912) was a lay Methodist and for many years a member of Philadelphia's Christ ME Church, at 38th and Hamburg Streets. He came to Philadelphia as a teenager to learn the trade of a bookbinder, studying music in the evenings. From 1858 to 1868 he was professor of music at Girard College, then went into the piano business with John E. Gould (another gospel song publisher), in which he prospered. Frequently called upon to lead mass choirs for special events and conventions, Fischer composed the music for many popular hymns, including "Whiter than Snow," "I am Trusting, Lord, in Thee," and "The Rock that is Higher Than I." His best-known tune is



William G. Fischer

HANKEY, the setting for the hymn "I Love to Tell the Story" (UMH 156). A detail of attribution not found in our hymnal, from an obituary written for the conference newspaper, claims that Kirkpatrick was the one who composed the words for the refrain. After setting Katherine Hankey's verses to music, he felt that the hymn "never seemed rounded out," until one night in bed the refrain came to him, an experience he always regarded as a vision, and often retold:

I love to tell the story, 'twill be my theme in glory!
To tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love.⁴⁷

Emily Divine Wilson (1865-1942) was married to Rev. John G. Wilson, who served 45 years as a preacher with the Philadelphia Conference, 19 years of them a district superintendent; he was also elected as a delegate to General Conference seven times. A gifted partner to and "the acknowledged inspiration" of her husband, Emily was remembered as "beloved by congregations served... [for] her musical ability... [and] her ability in dramatic art." The Wilsons were enthusiastic supporters of camp meetings, and well-known at Ocean Grove, New Jersey. Emily composed music and text for several hymns, the best known being the tune HEAVEN written for the song "When We All Get to Heaven" (UMH 701)⁴⁸

⁴⁷*The Philadelphia Methodist*, 31 August, 1912; and Hall, 131-132.

⁴⁸*Annual Minutes of the Philadelphia Conference, 1934, 379-380, and 1943, 684.* "When We all Get to Heaven" was published in *Pentecostal Praises* by William Kirkpatrick and Henry Gilmour (Philadelphia: Hall-Mack Co., 1898), with words by Eliza Hewitt. Other

Other Hymn Connections

There is an Eastern Pennsylvania connection with Fanny Crosby (1820-1915), perhaps the most famous of the 19th century gospel songwriters. Crosby was a Methodist who lived in New York, and was a member of the John Street Church. In 1869, she composed two hymns for the 100th anniversary celebration of the acquisition of old St. George's Church for the Methodists, "Re-consecration" and "Old St. George's," the latter proclaiming in part:

St. George's! Let thy columns stand,
Thy lofty pillars, hold their place;
From thee was wafted o'er the land
The glorious theme, "Free Grace, Free Grace."⁴⁹

Another of Crosby's hymns may have been inspired, at least in part, by Philadelphia conference lay evangelist Leander W. Munhall (1843-1934), who who knew and worked with such 19th century giants as Dwight Moody and Charles Spurgeon, and was a contributing author to *The Fundamentals*, the 1912 publication that gave fundamentalism its name. According to George Sanville, Munhall and Crosby were sitting on a hotel porch after camp meeting services in Poughkeepsie, NY, as the evangelist attempted to describe to the blind hymn-writer the glorious sunset before them. "I cannot see the sunset, but someday I shall see my Saviour face to face," Crosby responded. She later wrote her hymn, "Some Day The Silver Cord Will Break," stating in part,

Some day when fades the golden sun
Beneath the rosy-tinted west,
My blessed Lord shall say, "Well done,"
And I shall enter into rest.
Then I shall see him face to face,
And tell the story, saved by grace.⁵⁰

The popular hymn, *The Old Rugged Cross* (UMH 504) may have made its debut in Bucks County, though much about its origin is in dispute

compositions include the music for the hymns "The Wondrous Work the Lord Has Done" (text: S.C. Kirk), and "So Strange It Seemed and Wondrous" (text by S.C. Kirk). The Wilsons are buried at West Laurel Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia.

⁴⁹F. H. Tees, *The Story of Old St. George's* (Philadelphia: Message, 1941, 1946), 171.

⁵⁰George W. Sanville, *Forty Gospel Hymn Stories* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Rode-heaver Hall Mack Co., 1945), 36. Other sources say Crosby was inspired by a sermon of Dr. Howard Crosby's on the Christian's assurance of life eternal. Perhaps both played a role in the hymn's origin. For his part, Munhall also tried his hand at writing hymns, and even compiled a songbook entitled *Redemption Songs*, published in Philadelphia by John J. Hood in 1889. A hymn of Munhall's which still can be found today is "O Blessed Word."

(two towns in Michigan and one in Wisconsin claim to be its birthplace). But there is a story passed down by the daughter of Jennie Fenstermacher, who for years was organist at Grace Evangelical Church in Telford, Pennsylvania. The Fenstermachers were involved with services around 1913 for which Rev. George Bennard (1873-1958), author of the hymn, was engaged to preach and sing:

...my father, Frank Fenstermacher, a charter member of Grace United Methodist Church (formerly Grace Evangelical church), sponsored tent meetings in Silverdale, Tylersport, and Telford Junction, Summit Street Souderton. He personally engaged traveling evangelists to preach at the Silverdale tent meetings and stayed at the home of my parents. One Sunday afternoon Rev. Bennard showed the rough musical sketch of "The Old Rugged Cross" to my mother Jennie, who was an accomplished piano player. He told her to play it and he would sing it, because he wanted to sing it at the meeting in Silverdale that afternoon. The song was played and sung. Rev. Bennard said he would have the song copyrighted and published.⁵¹

One last hymn-tale (though the connection with Eastern Pennsylvania is a bit more tenuous) has to do with "Battle Hymn of the Republic" (UMH 717). Though not written by a Pennsylvanian or a Methodist (Julia Ward Howe was a Unitarian), the song was popularized by a Methodist preacher named Charles C. McCabe. A prisoner of the Civil War's infamous Libby Prison, "Chaplain" McCabe (as he always loved to be called) taught the song to his comrades to keep up their morale. Following his release, McCabe performed Battle Hymn before President Lincoln and other leaders, and was credited by Howe herself with making the song famous. McCabe also became famous on the lecture circuit for his speech "The Bright Side of Life in Libby Prison," and raised huge sums of money for the Church Extension Society of the ME Church, which had its office in Philadelphia. In 1904, McCabe was elected bishop and assigned to the Philadelphia area, where he served until his death in December 1906.

More recent Eastern Pennsylvania people who have dipped pens into the inkwells of hymn writing, composing or arranging include Daniel Lyman Ridout, a local African American musician and scholar, and member of Tindley Temple, who arranged and published a number of black spirituals during the mid-20th century. Rev. Larry Althouse has written several hymns, including one in 1952 entitled "He Lives Within My Heart," which was printed in the *Evangelical United Brethren Youth Song Book*, and used extensively at youth events in the Eastern Pennsylvania area. Rev. B. Warner Shaw was an inveterate versifier, writing many poems that could be sung to familiar hymn-tunes, including a revision of "Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life," written to commemorate Arch Street UM Church's 100th anniversary, in 1962. Rev. Bob Longenecker has

⁵¹From *A Tribute to Jennie Fenstermacher*, excerpt supplied by Rev. Cecil Potteiger.

tried his hand at hymn-writing, composing a hymn entitled "A Creed to Sing," that was first sung at First UMC of Germantown in 2000.

Among the most gifted of recent additions to the roster of area hymnists was the Rev. W. Richard Kohler (1929-2001), who spent most of his more than forty years of ministry in Eastern Pennsylvania. Kohler supplemented his call to preach with well-cultivated gifts as a pianist, organist and vocalist, and among his areas of service were twenty years as pianist for the Mount Gretna Bible Conference. A prolific composer of hymn-texts, most of Kohler's pieces were penned for the use of his local congregation in worship, though several were published, including "An Ascension Day Hymn," set to the tune of "Immortal Invisible" (ST. DENIO):



Rev. Dick Kohler

Incarnate, redeeming, victorious Lord,
Your earth-journey over, accept your reward:
All kingdoms and powers before you now fall;
Rule over your people as Sovereign of all.

Depart from us, Master, your going brings joy
In heavenly places, where saints may enjoy
Your grace and your favor for ages to come,
As one happy family when all gather home.

And we whom you leave here are never alone.
Your promised return does the absence atone.
The Spirit with power enough guarantee
Of blessing and unction beyond what we see.

Return to us, Savior, where once you have trod,
And claim earth with heav'n for the Kingdom of God.
In hope of that time we will work and we'll pray,
Assured of your vict'ry and lordship each day.⁵²

⁵²The hymn appeared in the May/June 1984 issue of *Pulpit Digest*.

Eastern Pennsylvania also takes pride in having a shaping influence on Peter Stoltzfus, currently Music Minister and Organist at Christ Episcopal Church in Los Altos, California. Stoltzfus grew up in Lancaster's Otterbein UM Church, and was church organist while in high school. He is an internationally known organist and composer, who has recorded a number of compact discs, and has had compositions published by Oxford University Press.

Conclusion

More could be said about recent trends in hymnody, where much of the leadership has passed from the older evangelically-based denominations, to the more highly liturgical traditions of the Episcopal and Roman Catholic Churches. But today, we are able to draw upon the riches of 2,000 years of song; whether old or new, we still sing the liturgical hymn, which expresses the faith of the church; we still sing the evangelical hymn, which expresses the faith of the believer. The modern "praise-song" phenomenon seems to be almost a case of the camp-meeting chorus resurrected: simple, repetitive choruses, appealing especially to people ecclesiastically unlettered (if otherwise well-educated), supported by a bevy of extra-denominational publishers and suppliers – yet one more installment of the very American pattern of a musical movement born among the people, rather than directed from above by church officials.

Part of the enduring potency of hymns is, of course, rooted in the power of music itself to reach deeply into a person's soul, in a way that exercises of the intellect cannot do. It has been asked: which is more powerful in drawing people forward at Billy Graham crusades, his message or the hymn of invitation, "Just As I Am"? But hymns also have a sort of inescapable quality to them. It is easy enough to forget or dismiss the words of a preacher or a book. But once the words of a hymn, however hokey, have been drilled into a person's mind, they can be awfully hard to shake, and can continue to be a vehicle – dare I say a means of grace? – through which God can continue to speak and call out to the wandering soul.

God in whom they live and move, let every creature sing!
 Glory to their maker give, and homage to their king!
 Hallowed be thy name beneath, as in heaven on earth adored;
 Praise the Lord in every breath, let all things praise the Lord!

(Charles Wesley, 1743, "Praise the Lord Who Reigns Above," UMH 96)