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CHRISTIAN HYMNODY LITERATURE
by Henry Wilder Foote

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Greek Hymns. Hymns, defined by St. Augustine as "praise to God with song," have been used in the Christian Church from its beginning, although in different ways and degrees in different times and places. The first book of praise used by Greek-speaking Christians was the Septuagint version of the psalms, although there are in the Pauline epistles fragments of what seem to have been original hymns of the Apostolic age. These probably resembled canticles in form and were sung by a cantor, with a refrain sung by the congregation. By the end of the 4th c. Christian hymns had assumed a form that distinguished them from psalms on the one hand and prose canticles on the other, so that by a hymn we now understand a metrical sequence of words in a symmetrical arrangement of stanzas, either rhymed or unrhymed,

not directly quoted from the *Bible*, and intended to be sung in a service of worship.

There are a few examples of Christian song dating from the 3rd and 4th c., the best known being that with which Clement of Alexandria (d. ca. 215) closes his *Paedagogus*, *Stomion polon adaon* (translated by H. M. Dexter, *Shepherd of tender youth*), the candle-lighting hymn (Hail! Gladsome Light), and the corresponding morning hymn called *The Great Doxology*, an extended form of the *Gloria in Excelsis*. These last two were in general liturgical use by the middle of the 4th c. The earliest examples of a more popular type of Christian hymnody were produced about the middle of the 4th c. by St. Ephraem (d. 373) who wrote Syriac hymns, and St. Gregory Nazianzen (d. ca. 390) who wrote Greek hymns, in each case to counteract the

influence of the hymns by which the Gnostic and Arian heretics of the period were spreading their doctrines. The real founder of Greek hymnody, however, was Romanos, (d. ca. 560) who wrote 80 "kontakia," poems of twenty to thirty strophes of varying structure. In the 8th c. St. Andrew of Crete (d. ca. 740) created a hymnic form known as a "canon," one of his hymns running to 250 strophes. St. John of Damascus later in the same c. cultivated the same form. In the 9th c. an important group of hymn-writers was connected with the monastery of the Studium of Constantinople, the best-known being St. Joseph the Hymnographer (d. ca. 883), St. Theodore, and his brother Joseph. The "kontakia," "canon" and other forms of Greek hymnody were long, diffuse and rhetorical, neither intended for nor adapted to congregational and popular use, but they were incorporated in the Divine Liturgy of the Eastern Church, for the very voluminous character of which their immense number and length is in part responsible. By the 10th c. the impulse that had produced them was practically exhausted; there are only a few examples of later date, chiefly emanating from the Basilian convent of Grotta Ferrata near Rome.

Greek hymnody remained unknown to western Europe until the appearance in the middle of the 19th c. of translations (or adaptations) by John Mason Neale and others of a small number of selected hymns. Although much scholarly work has since been done in this field, the remoteness of Greek hymnody from western tradition, in its liturgical character and setting, its immense bulk, its great variety of forms, and the complex problems of its development, have limited acquaintance with it to a small group of specialists, and the hymnody of western Europe since the 4th c. has had an entirely independent evolution.

Latin Hymns. The earliest Latin hymns

were those by Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, (d. 366) who in the course of his exile of 4 years in Asia Minor noted the great influence of the popular Syriac and Greek hymns, and sought to introduce hymn singing into the western Church. The few items of his verse that survive, with one or two hymns doubtfully attributed to him, served no further than to point the way to possible developments; it was Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (340-397) Hilary's younger contemporary, who was the real founder of Latin hymnody. About a dozen hymns can with some assurance be attributed to him. About 80 more, written in his style and soon after his period, are called "Ambrosian." Of these a very few may be by him, but the great majority are certainly by others following his example. The finest of his hymns are *Aeternae rerum Conditor*; *Deus Creator omnium*; *O Lux beata Trinitas*; *Splendor Paternae gloriae*, and *Veni Redemptor gentium*.

The hymns by Ambrose are marked by depth of thought set forth with an austere simplicity and terseness of language. The meter is that of iambic dimeter, substantially the same as modern long meter, but unrhymed; the quantitative principle of classic Latin verse was abandoned in favor of the rhythmical or accentual principle in use for popular verse (as had also been the case with Greek hymnody), so that the hymns by Ambrose were recognized at once as poetry for the people. The use of the Ambrosian hymns spread rapidly and, as they were adopted by St. Benedict (6th c.) for regular use in the Breviary offices, this earliest hymnody of the Latin Church was fortunately preserved. Ambrose also introduced antiphonal chanting from the East, and initiated the development of church music carried on later by Gregory the Great (6th c.).

A younger contemporary of Ambrose, the Spanish author Prudentius, produced early in the 5th c. two poetical works, the

Cathemerinon and *Peristephanon*, which gave him widespread and lasting reputation as a Christian poet. The first is a collection of lyric hymns for the several hours of prayer in the day and for the festivals of the year. The second commemorates the martyrs of the Church, especially those of Spain. Although intended for private reading, and cast in a rich variety of verse-forms, some of his hymns were taken into the Breviary in abbreviated form, and, as Ambrose had set the form for the more austere liturgical hymnody, Prudentius set a type of more florid and exuberant festival verse which many later writers followed. The most famous of his hymns are the one for Holy Innocents, *Salvete flores martyrum*, one for Christmas; *Corde natus ex Parentis*, and the hymns for Lauds, *Nox et tenebrae et nubila*, and *Lux ecce surgit aurea*.

About the close of the 5th and beginning of the 6th c. Venantius Fortunatus, Bishop of Poitiers (d. ca. 605), half ecclesiastic, half troubadour-courtier of the Merovingian period, wrote much verse, including the great hymn on the crucifixion, *Vexilla regis prodeunt*, which the author composed for the reception of a fragment of the so-called "True Cross" that the Emperor Justin II had sent to Queen Rhadegunda, who was Fortunatus' patroness. The hardly less beautiful

*Pange, lingua, gloriosi
Proelium certaminis,*

is also generally attributed to him, though with less certainty. These two hymns are among the great classics of Latin hymnody.

Two centuries later the revival of letters under the empire of the first Carolingians produced a few hymns. Paulus Diaconus (d. 799) wrote a poem on John the Baptist which included the hymn, *Ut queant laxis resonare fibris*, noteworthy not only for its excellence but because Guido of Arezzo in

the 11th c. borrowed from its successive lines the syllables *Ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la*, to serve as names of the successively rising notes to which the opening lines of the hymn were sung, and these syllables (with a change of *ut* to *do*) are still in use. To Theodulf, Bishop of Orleans, (d. 821) is attributed the Palm Sunday hymn, *Gloria, laus et honor*; and Rabanus Maurus (d. 856) was the author of several hymns, including one of the greatest, *Veni, Creator Spiritus*.

The famous monastery of St. Gall at this period, and long afterwards, produced a series of writers of hymns and sequences, of whom Notker Balbulus (d. 912) is the most important. In his time no satisfactory system of musical notes had been developed, and melodies had to be memorized and orally transmitted with the aid of very inadequate notations. Notker found great difficulty in remembering the elaborate cadences with which it had become customary to decorate the final *a* of the word *Alleluia* in the Gradual between the Epistle and the Gospel. About 862 a monk came to St. Gall with an Antiphonary in which Notker found words, with little meaning set to the troublesome notes as an aid in memorizing them. Impressed by the idea Notker undertook to write more suitable words, each syllable set to a single note. Since the music followed the Alleluia it became known as the sequence, and since Notker's words were in rhythmical prose they were called proses, though the term sequence is now more commonly applied to them than to the music. Notker wrote about 50 proses, the best known one of this early period (though doubtfully attributed to Notker himself) being *In media vita in morte sumus*, translated in the burial office of the *Book of Common Prayer* as *In the midst of life we are in death*.

The noble character of Notker's proses led to the rapid spread of their use in northern Europe, and to the writing of many others

by a succession of authors of whom the greatest was Adam of St. Victor (d. 1177); but long before the time of Adam the prose form of the sequence had given way to verse forms indistinguishable from hymns, the only distinction between sequences and hymns being that the former were used in the Mass, the latter in the other offices of worship of the church.

In most medieval missals of North European origin, proper sequences were appointed for nearly every Sunday and holiday, but the use varied according to locality. When the Roman Missal was revised in 1570 all sequences were eliminated save four, viz.

(1) *Victimae Paschali* (for Easter), of unknown authorship but illustrating the transition from the early irregular, unrhymed Notkerian sequence to the rhymed sequences of Adam of St. Victor.

(2) *Veni Sancte Spiritus* (for Pentecost), one of the greatest pieces of Latin sacred poetry, which has been attributed to several persons, the probable author being Pope Innocent III (d. 1216). It is written in a verse form not found earlier than 1150.

(3) *Lauda, Sion, Salvatorem* (for Corpus Christi), written by St. Thomas Aquinas ca. 1260.

(4) *Dies irae, dies illa* (Requiem Mass). This sequence is certainly of Italian authorship, and probably was written by Thomas of Celano, a Brother Minor of the Franciscan Order (13th c.) and the biographer of St. Francis of Assisi. It is the most majestic of all sequences, perfect in form, a poignant expression of medieval fear of the day of judgment. Like an earlier hymn on the same subject, *Gravi me terrore pulsas*, by Peter Damiani (1007-72) it was written not as a hymn but as a meditation, the two concluding strophes being added later to adapt it to liturgical use.

To these four sequences retained in the Missal from the medieval use there was added

in the 18th c. a fifth, viz. *Stabat mater dolorosa* (Friday after Passion Sunday), which stands with the *Dies Irae* as a supreme achievement of the religious verse of the Middle Ages. It is certainly of Franciscan origin but is doubtfully attributed to Jacopone da Todi (1230-ca. 1306), who wrote *Laude*, popular religious songs in the Umbrian dialect. As in all the Franciscan poetry, the personal note is emphasized.

Adam of St. Victor was the greatest hymn-writer of the 12th c., one of the foremost in the whole range of Latin Christian poetry. He lived long as a monk in the famous monastery of St. Victor outside Paris, and wrote a large number of sequences, of which perhaps the two finest are one on the martyrdom of St. Stephen,

*Heri mundus exsultavit
Et exsultans celebravit
Christi natalitia,*

and one for Easter,

*Zyma vetus expurgetur,
Ut sincere celebretur
Nova resurrectio.*

Adam produced verse which combined perfection of form with sublimity of thought and richness of allusion hitherto unequalled, and never surpassed. After the drastic revision of the Missal and the Breviary in the 16th c., his sequences disappeared alike from use and from recollection, and were rediscovered only in the 19th c. The number of poems that can be attributed to him is uncertain, since there were other writers of the Victorian school using the same style of verse, one of whom produced the great sequence *Laudes Crucis attollamus*. The 12th c. also saw the production of the great poem *De Contemptu Mundi* by St. Bernard of Cluny, beginning *Hora novissima tempora pessima sunt, vigilemus*,

which ran to 3,000 lines in leonine meter. Three passages from it, translated by J. M. Neale: *The world is very evil; Brief life is here our portion, and Jerusalem the golden,* have come into widespread modern use.

In the next century Arnulf of Louvain (ca. 1240) wrote a poem *De Passione Domini* the last section of which, *Salve caput cruentatum*, was the inspiration of Paulus Gerhardt's great German hymn *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden*, well-known in its English translation by J. W. Alexander, *O sacred head, now wounded*. But the greatest 13th c. hymn-writer was St. Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225-74). His reputation as a scholar and theologian led Urban IV in 1264 to assign him the task of preparing a Mass for the newly established Feast of Corpus Christi. For it he wrote the sequence *Lauda, Sion, Salvatorem*, referred to above, and also a hymn for vespers,

*Pange lingua gloriosi
Corporis mysterium,*

and a hymn for private devotion,

*Adoro te devote, latens Deitas,
Quae sub his figuris vere latitas.*

These three hymns are the supreme dogmatic poems of the Middle Ages, closely woven precise expressions of the dogma of the Real Presence, wrought out with austerity of form but with sublime grandeur and beauty of phrase. They were the last great utterances of the Latin church poets, although for many decades thereafter Latin hymns were produced in great abundance. These later hymns, however, exhibited a steady decline in form and degenerated into sentimental trivialities.

By the 14th c. Latin could no longer compete with the growing use of national languages, and poets increasingly wrote in their native tongues. The immense body of Latin

hymnody, produced during a period of about 1,000 years and rivaling in extent and excellence the later hymnody in German and in English, steadily receded into the background of men's minds. The Roman Church itself helped to consign much of it to oblivion (until it was rediscovered in the 19th c.) by the revision of the hymns of the church instituted by Pope Leo in 1513, who sought to eliminate what to scholars of the classical revival of the Renaissance seemed the barbarisms of the medieval writers. A revised hymnary was published in 1523, and successive steps led to the revised Roman Breviary of 1632. Thereafter a great proportion of the medieval hymns and sequences disappeared from use, while most of those that were retained were drastically re-written. The modern ritual of the Roman Church, therefore, contains only a very small part of the great body of Latin hymnody and in forms greatly modified from the original. The only notable fresh Latin hymns were those included in the *Paris Breviary* of 1736, written in strict classical style, for the most part by Charles Coffin (1676-1749) and by the brothers Claude (1628-84) and Jean Baptiste de Santeuil (1630-97).

German Hymnody. The Reformation produced a fresh outburst of Christian song, and almost all the hymns written since the early part of the 16th c. have come from Protestant sources. Since in the Roman Church singing had been restricted to the clergy and to the religious in the monastic orders, the Latin hymns were practically unknown to the laity, and modern hymnody, in the sense of popular religious lyrics in praise of God intended to be sung by congregations in public worship, is a fresh creation characteristic of Protestantism.

Prior to the Reformation there existed a considerable body of popular religious song on the continent of Europe. Wackernagel collected nearly 1450 German examples dated

between 868 and 1518, some of them translated from the Latin, some mixed Latin and German. In Bohemia the followers of John Huss (*Unitas Fratrum*) produced a hymn-book as early as 1501. For the most part these songs were for use outside the churches. Luther, who was a poet and music lover, gave the German people the *Bible*, a catechism, and a hymn-book in their own tongue, and he early saw in hymn-singing a potent instrument for the spread of his teachings. He is credited with 37 hymns, written between 1523 and 1543, most of them in 1524. The most famous is *Ein' feste Burg*, based on *Psalm 46*, written in 1529. His hymns are simple, clear-cut, confident, and effective. He encouraged others to write hymns, so that during his lifetime a considerable body of German hymns came into wide-spread use. He drew on many sources for his hymn tunes, making use of adaptations from popular melodies as well as from the traditional music of the Roman Church. Thus the Reformation sang its way into the hearts of the German People. Luther's influence in this respect is comparable to that of Ambrose as the founder of Latin hymnody.

The 2nd period in German hymnody (1570-1648) was one of controversy, followed by the miseries of the Thirty Years' War. It saw the production of a good deal of subjective verse and of "hymns of the cross," but its finest utterance was Martin Rinkart's *Nun danket alle Gott*, which expresses the feeling of relief at the coming of peace. The 3d period (1648-80) is that of pietism, marked by a group of mystical writers, of whom the outstanding figure was Paulus Gerhardt. This pietism soon developed into an evangelical revolt against the cold formalism into which the Lutheran Church had stiffened, and produced the "Second Reformation" (1680-1757). In the German Reformed Church this was represented by two great hymn writers, Joachim Neander

(1650-80) and Gerhard Tersteegen (1697-1767). Two of Neander's finest hymns are joyful exultations: *Himmel, Erde, Luft und Meer*, and *Lobe den Herren*. Tersteegen wrote in a more mystical vein, illustrated by his *O Gott, O Geist, O Licht des Lebens*, and *Verborgne Gottes liebe du*, translated by John Wesley as *Thou hidden love of God, whose height . . .*

The latter part of this period also saw the rebirth of the Protestant movement known as the *Unitas Fratrum* (Moravian Brethren), which had originated more than 2 c. earlier in Bohemia but had been almost extinguished. It came to new life at Herrnhut under the leadership of Count Zinzendorf, who was a prolific hymn writer, though sometimes led into fantastic emotional extravagances. In his hymn collections he laid the foundations for the Moravian hymnody of the present day.

The period of Rationalism or "Enlightenment" which followed (1757-1817) witnessed a reaction against the earlier German hymnody. The form and language of some of the early hymns had come to seem uncouth, and many of them were drastically recast to suit the temper of the rising rationalism. Although much mediocre verse was written to promulgate the current views, very few hymns of good quality were produced, for although this was the classical period of German literature and poetry, none of the great poets of the day, except Klopstock, had any sympathy with what seemed to them the outworn concepts of evangelical religion. With the evangelical revival ca. 1818 there was a new outburst of Christian song, which lasted until the latter part of the century, but the great period of German hymnody lies between 1523, when Luther began hymn-writing, and the death of Count Zinzendorf in 1760. It is estimated that German hymnody includes about 100,000 hymns, approximately the same as Latin hymnody. Although John Wesley after his voyage to America in 1735

translated a few German hymns, they remained, as a whole, unknown to the English speaking world until the mid 19th c., when a considerable number were translated, chiefly by a small group of English women, especially Catherine Winkworth, who published *Lyra Germanica* (2 v.) 1855-1858.

Psalmody. In the Reformed Churches that followed John Calvin congregational singing was long restricted to the use of metrical psalms. Calvin, who was neither a poet nor a musician, would permit no "man-made" hymns, nor any tunes that were not grave and devotional in character. He employed the poet Clément Marot and other writers to translate the *Psalms* into French verse, for the use of his congregation at Geneva, leading, by successive steps, to the publication of the complete *Genevan Psalter*, 1562. The music was prepared for the most part by Louis Bourgeois, who drew on various older and mostly unidentified sources for his psalm-tunes.

This Genevan psalmody set the model for congregational singing in the Reformed Churches, of which psalm-singing became as characteristic a mark as hymn-singing was of the Lutheran Church. The Genevan psalmody was used by the Huguenots in France and by the later French Protestants down to the 19th c., although supplements of hymns that were based on, or were paraphrases of, *Scripture* were slowly admitted to use in the course of the 18th c. The French Protestant minister, César Malan (1787-1864) gave the first strong impulse to hymnody among French Protestants with his collection *Chants de Sion* (1828), which included many of his own hymns and tunes. His influence in substituting hymns for psalms is comparable to that of Isaac Watts in England. His book was followed by *Chants Crétiens* (1834) by Henri Lutteroth, which included a good deal of verse by earlier poets, hitherto not used as hymns, set to good music. This was the

classical period of French Protestant hymnody, subjective and pietistic in character. As in France, so in Germany and Holland, the Reformed Churches at first used only metrical psalms, often set to other tunes than those used in Geneva. The German Reformed Church, however, early yielded to the influence of its hymn-singing neighbors, and in the 18th c. produced at least the two great hymn-writers, Joachim Neander and Gerhard Tersteegen, noted above.

English psalmody goes back to Thomas Sternhold, groom of the robes to Henry VIII, who as early as 1548 published a collection of 19 metrical psalms, which he had written and sung for his private edification. He died in 1549 but in that year an enlarged edition with 37 psalms was published posthumously, and in a 3d edition, 1551, John Hopkins included seven that he had written, though he disclaimed any comparison between his work and Sternhold's "most exquisite doynges." When great numbers of English Protestants fled to the Continent from the persecution that began with the accession of Queen Mary Tudor, they came under the influence of Calvin. Using the metrical psalms by Sternhold and John Hopkins as a basis, and adding others by various writers, they printed at Geneva incomplete English psalters in 1556 and 1561, and after their return to England, following the accession of Elizabeth, John Day of London printed for them *The Whole Book of Psalmes, Collected in to English Metre by T. Sternhold, J. Hopkins, and others.* It was commonly called *Sternhold and Hopkins*, until the appearance of the *New Version* by Tate and Brady in 1696 led to its being nicknamed *The Old Version*.

Probably because the Anglican authorities inclined to Calvin's objection to "man-made" hymns, no translations of Latin hymns were included when the *English Book of Common Prayer* was compiled (except the *Veni Creator Spiritus* for ordinations). This lack of any

provision for hymn-singing led people to seize eagerly upon the metrical psalms, and psalm-singing, both in church and outside, spread with great rapidity. Neither the English metrical psalms nor the majority of the tunes to which they were set reached the level of excellence of the French *Genevan Psalter*, but the ballad meters in which they were written were familiar and popular and the tunes were singable. The typical ballad stanza was in iambic quatrains, 4, 3, 4, 3, (now known as common meter); but iambic quatrains of tetrameter lines (long meter), and iambic quatrains, 3, 3, 4, 3 (short meter), all usually rhymed a, b, a, b, were occasionally used. The ballad stanza set the form in which the greatest number of English hymns have been written, although in the 19th c. other, more elaborate meters were introduced in increasing measure, in part due to the example of German hymnody, in which a great variety of verse forms was in use.

The *Old Version* acquired a prestige second only to the *Book of Common Prayer*; it remained in use in some parts of England to the 19th c., although after 1696 the smoother and more modern verse of the *New Version* gradually came to occupy most of the field. In Scotland the *Scottish Psalter* was developed along similar lines, culminating in the version of 1650, which in many respects was superior to the English psalmody and which remains the only version of the psalms used by Presbyterian Scotland to the present day. In New England the Puritans, seeking a metrical version of the psalms that should adhere even more closely to the original Hebrew than did *Sternhold and Hopkins*, published in 1640 at Cambridge, Massachusetts, the first book printed in the English-speaking colonies, which, with the revised edition of 1652, is commonly called *The Bay Psalter*. To modern eyes most of this psalmody appears archaic and lacking in poetic merit, but it met the demand for an exact rendering of the in-

spired scripture rather than for smoothly flowing verse.

English Hymnody. Until the 18th c. psalmody alone was, with rare exceptions, used in worship in the English speaking world, although a considerable body of English verse suitable for use in worship was in existence, notably Bishop Ken's morning and evening hymns (1695). In 1707-9 Isaac Watts (1674-1748) published his *Hymns* and in 1719 his *Imitations of the Psalms*, free paraphrases cast in the form of hymns. A number of Watts' hymns remain in use, notably the one based on the 90th Psalm, *Our God, our help in ages past, and*

*When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of glory died.*

These were quickly taken up by the Non-Conformists, and were followed by the hymns by Philip Doddridge (1702-51), notably his *Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve*; Charles Wesley (1707-1788), and others. Wesley's hymns gave fire and wings to the Methodist revival; indeed the Methodists long sang little else. He was a very prolific writer, often degenerating into an unreal sentimentality, but his finest hymns are among the great treasures of Christian song, as *Hark! the herald angels sing*, and *Love divine, all love excelling*.

The Church of England, however, clung to psalmody until near the end of the c., when the hymnbooks of the Anglican writers Toplady, Cowper, and Newton slowly led to the introduction of hymn-singing. Except for the hymns of these three writers almost all those produced in England in the 18th c. were the work of Non-Conformists. In the 19th c. the situation was in a measure reversed. The Non-Conformists produced fewer and on the whole less distinguished writers, although James Montgomery was a conspicuous exception. The Church of England, on the other hand,

having at length broken away from psalmody, poured out a great volume of new song, beginning with Reginald Heber's hymns (pub. posthumously, 1827). His most famous hymns are *From Greenland's icy mountains*, and *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty*. During the next half century a large number of hymns of fine quality, chiefly by Anglicans, came rapidly into use, set to the new tunes of the English "Cathedral School" of composers. Whereas the hymnody of the 18th c. most frequently struck an evangelical note of personal introspection in terms that often sound morbid to modern ears, that of the 19th c. Anglican writers was predominantly objective, with emphasis on the collective aspects of the Christian life, although both words and music are often sentimental, a tendency exemplified at its worst by F. W. Faber. The most notable of these Anglican hymn-writers were H. W. Baker: *The King of love my shepherd is*; S. Baring-Gould: *Onward, Christian soldiers*; J. Ellerton: *Saviour, again to Thy dear name we raise*; J. W. Neale, who translated or adapted many hymns from the Greek Liturgy; J. H. Newman: *Lead kindly Light* (written before his conversion to Roman Catholicism); Catherine Winkworth (translations from the German); and Christopher Wordsworth: *O day of rest and gladness*; but there were many other writers of fine quality in this period.

There being no official hymnal in the Church of England a great number of collections were published, for the most part quite mediocre until the appearance of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, 1861. This notable collection had by far the widest acceptance, but in this c. its leadership has been contested by the *English Hymnal* (1906) and *Songs of Praise* (1927). The flood of new hymns slackened as the 19th c. drew to a close, and only a few hymns of outstanding quality have been written in England in this c. Of these the finest is by Canon G. W.

Briggs (b. 1875): *Lord of all majesty and might*.

The whole body of English hymnody (including the metrical psalms and hymns by American writers) has reached proportions approximating those of the Latin and German hymnody, and is a much more adequate expression of modern religious thought.

American Hymnody. American hymnody is, strictly speaking, a subdivision of the English. *The Bay Psalter* reigned supreme in New England for a century, after which it was slowly replaced by the hymnody of Watts and his school. In the Middle and Southern colonies, either the *Old Version* or the *New Version* of the Psalms was more generally used. Gradually supplements of hymns were added to the psalm-books, but very few books in which hymns were predominant appeared until the 19th c., and for a long time the only hymns contained therein were those of the English writers of the 18th c. In the late 18th c., the Methodists introduced the Wesleyan hymnody, but it had little influence in other groups until after the turn of the century. Although a few hymns were written by Americans before 1800, they had almost no general use and are now forgotten. The earliest American hymn still in use is Timothy Dwight's *I love thy church, O God*, written about 1800. The Episcopalians, chiefly in the Middle States, found their needs largely supplied by the flood of hymns from the Church of England, and their official *Church Hymnal* has followed English models. Probably the best-known American Episcopal hymnwriters are Bishop G. W. Doane (1790-1850) with his *Fling out the banner, let it float*, and *Softly now the light of day*; and Bishop Phillips Brooks: *O little town of Bethlehem*.

The Methodists were even more under the domination of Charles Wesley until near the end of the 19th c. The Baptists had an outstanding hymn-writer and editor in S. F.

Smith (1808-95), author of *My Country, 'tis of thee*. His missionary hymn, *The morning light is breaking*, is also used today. The Presbyterians clung longest to psalmody, but have had a few writers of good quality, the most widely known being J. W. Alexander with his translation *O Sacred head, now wounded*. The Congregationalists, including both the Orthodox and the Unitarian wings into which they split in 1825, produced the earliest and the most prolific group of American hymn-writers. The Orthodox wing has had a succession of good writers, each of whom has produced one or more hymns of fine quality. Among them are E. W. Shurtleff (1862-1917) with *Lead on, O king eternal*, and Washington Gladden (1836-1918) *O Master, let me walk with thee*.

The hymnbooks of the Congregationalists have generally been of good quality, the most influential being Henry Ward Beecher's *Plymouth Collection* (1855). The Unitarians, though numerically a very small body, belonged socially and intellectually to that strain of the Puritan stock from which came the literary awakening known as "the New England Renaissance," which began ca. 1815 and continued through most of the c. Their hymn-writers—far more numerous than those of any other denomination—have produced about half of the hymns of exceptional excellence written in this country. Their hymnody has been characterized by two major strains: on the one hand there is a strongly mystical note; on the other hand, a stirring call to action for the welfare of mankind. The most notable Unitarian writers have been W. C. Bryant (1794-1878); O. W. Holmes (1809-94) with *Lord of all being, throned afar*; Samuel Longfellow (1819-92), the best American hymn writer of the middle of the 19th c.; Samuel Johnson (1822-82); E. H. Sears (1810-76); and F. L. Hosmer (1840-1929), the foremost American hymn-writer during the last quarter of that century. The best of S. Longfel-

low's hymns are *One holy church of God appears*, and *God of the earth, the sea, the sky*. S. Johnson's *City of God, how broad and far*, is widely used in the English-speaking world, as is Sears' *It came upon the midnight clear*. Hosmer produced a score of hymns of fine quality, notably

*O Thou who art of all that is
Beginning both and end,*

a flawless lyric, *O Thou, in all Thy might so far*, and what has been called one of the noblest hymns in English,

*Thy kingdom come! On bended knee,
The passing ages pray.*

Two other types of American religious song must be briefly mentioned. One is the Negro *spiritual*, of which several hundred examples have been collected. The *Spirituals* are religious folk songs, often of great beauty, springing out of the heart of the Negro people both before and since the days of slavery. The other type is the revivalist *Gospel hymn*, promoted by Moody and Sankey, the origins of which go back to the 18th c. but which swept the country ca. 1870-1915. These songs were immensely popular, though for the most part of very inferior quality. They represent an aspect of American religious life much less influential than formerly.

Although the American contribution to the great body of English hymnody is still relatively small in quantity, the better portion of it is of high excellence as a modern interpretation of religion, and is finding increasing use in England.

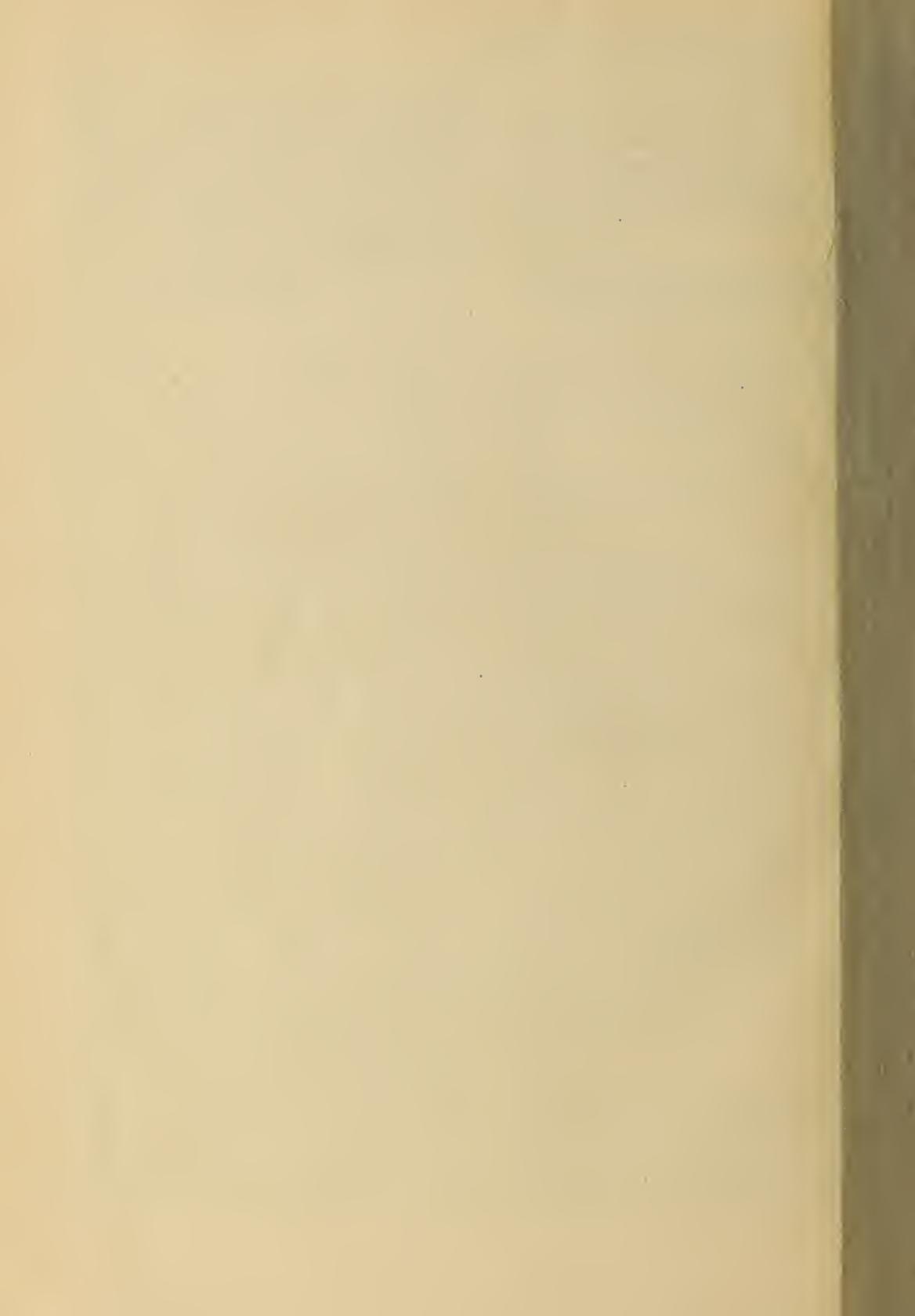
There are two noticeable current tendencies in English hymnody. In the Anglican Church there is a steady increase in the use of translations of the early or medieval Latin hymns, set to "proper" plain-song melodies. The other tendency is away from the use of hymns with

a doctrinal emphasis toward those that sing of the application of religion to the life of the world. Although there has been a slackening in the production of new hymns since 1900, there is no reason to believe that the stream of English hymnody has in any degree run dry.

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Breviary and Missal, 1922; F. J. E. Raby, *Christian Latin Poetry*, 1927; P. Wackernagel, *Das Deutsche Kirchenlied von der ältesten Zeit bis zu Anfang des XVII Jahrhunderts*, 1864-77; E. E. Koch, *Gesch. des Kirchenlieds und Kirchengesangs*, 1870; C. Winkworth, *Christian Singers of G.*, 1869; L. F. Benson, *The Eng. Hymn*, 1915; G. F. Gillman, *The Evolution of the Eng. Hymn*, 1927; H. W. Foote, *Three Centuries of Am. Hymnody*, 1940.

HENRY WILDER FOOTE.



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