



3 1761 02089429 1

# The Best Church Hymns





THE LIBRARY  
of  
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY  
Toronto





THE

*Anglican*

# Best Church Hymns

EDITED

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

THE REV. LOUIS F. BENSON, D.D.

Editor of The Hymnal Published by Authority of the General  
Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in the  
U. S. A., and of The Chapel Hymnal

1/14

PHILADELPHIA

The Westminster Press

1899

F.V.  
-1-1  
E-1

EMMANUEL,

STOR

Copyright, 1898,  
By the Trustees of The Presbyterian Board of Publication  
and Sabbath-School Work.

60664  
4-12-36

## Preface

This little book had its origin in two papers prepared at the request of the editor of *The Sunday School Times*, and printed in that journal in the autumn of 1897. They are now, by his courteous permission, substantially reproduced here. As there recorded, the collation covered ninety-eight hymn-books, and is now brought down to cover nine more not then at hand or since published. It is interesting to note that this enlargement of the material effected no change in the list of the best hymns, except in some cases a change in their relative order, and the addition of one more hymn to their fellowship.

But the better part of the book is the hymns themselves. As far as practicable they are printed as their authors wrote them; such accepted alterations as it seemed necessary to adopt being referred to in the notes. The text of the hymns reproduces in all respects

## Preface.

---

that prepared by the editor for "The Hymnal" of the Presbyterian Church, published in 1895. Each hymn is preceded by the title given to it by the author, which often helps us to read the hymn from his point of view; and the hymn is followed by a very brief sketch setting forth something of its history, and by notes intended to explain any words which are not at once clear, as well as to call attention to the Scriptural allusions of the hymn.

A word of apology, perhaps, should be spoken for the simplicity of these annotations. They must be understood as intended to appeal to the minds of the children, who, it is hoped, may be encouraged to lay up these hymns in their memories; it being the intention of the publishers to issue the pages containing the hymns and annotations apart from the preliminary discussions, for use as a textbook, with that desirable end in view.

# Contents

---

	PAGE
PREFACE, . . . . .	iii

## Introduction

I. WHAT ARE THE BEST CHURCH HYMNS? . . .	ix
II. WHAT IS TO-DAY THE STANDARD OF THE BEST CHURCH HYMNS? . . . . .	xxi

## The Hymns

1. Rock of Ages, cleft for me . . . . .	3
2. When I survey the wondrous cross . . . . .	4
3. Jesus, Lover of my soul . . . . .	6
4. All praise to Thee, my God, this night . . . . .	8
5. Jesus, I my cross have taken . . . . .	10
6. Sun of my soul, Thou Saviour dear . . . . .	12
7. Awake, my soul, and with the sun . . . . .	13
8. Hark! the herald angels sing . . . . .	15
9. Abide with me: fast falls the eventide . . . . .	17
10. Jerusalem, my happy home . . . . .	19
11. How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds . . . . .	20
12. Nearer, my God, to Thee . . . . .	22
13. From Greenland's icy mountains . . . . .	24
14. Our God, our Help in ages past . . . . .	26

## Contents.

	PAGE
15. Jerusalem the golden . . . . .	28
16. Lo! He comes, with clouds descending . . . . .	30
17. Jesus shall reign where'er the sun . . . . .	32
18. Glorious things of thee are spoken . . . . .	34
19. Hark, the glad sound! the Saviour comes . . . . .	36
20. Come, let us join our cheerful songs . . . . .	37
21. All hail the power of Jesus' Name . . . . .	39
22. Hail to the Lord's Anointed . . . . .	41
23. O worship the King all glorious above . . . . .	43
24. Christ the Lord is risen to-day . . . . .	45
25. Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah . . . . .	46
26. Just as I am, without one plea . . . . .	47
27. God moves in a mysterious way . . . . .	49
28. Jesus, the very thought of Thee . . . . .	50
29. Children of the heavenly King . . . . .	52
30. There is a land of pure delight . . . . .	53
31. Thou, whose almighty word . . . . .	55
32. Brief life is here our portion . . . . .	57

## Introduction



## I.

# What are the Best Church Hymns?

---

Much of what is written upon the character and quality of our hymns fails either to enlighten or convince; and this is because the writer, or, it may be, the reader, does not clearly distinguish the two points of view from which hymns may be regarded: for hymnody is at once a branch of literature and a branch of liturgics, and the characteristics of a hymn are not the same in the two departments. In literature, for example, both Coleridge and Shelley are looked upon as skilled in the right use of English words, and the one published a "Hymn before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamouni," and the other, a "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty"; yet, from the liturgical point of view, these pieces are not in any sense to be recognized as hymns. Again, a piece of verse, properly

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

spoken of, from a liturgical point of view, as "a good hymn," may seem to a mere literary critic quite unworthy of any such distinction. The methods and ends of poetic literature are one thing, and the uses of God's house are another, and, while they do not necessarily conflict, they do establish differing scales of excellence, and they do demand differing criteria of judgment. Unless we are to have confusion, one or the other point of view should be distinctly chosen, and then persistently maintained.

The title of this book suggests that we are dealing now with hymns for Church use, and that among such hymns we are seeking the best. But the mere announcement of that point of view is not enough. It must be adhered to. And just here it is that confusion so often creeps in. Some one starts out to test the quality of Church hymns, and then at once proceeds to test them, not by a study of the actual experience of the Church in their use, but by applying to them his personal opinions and judgment of what a good hymn ought to be. He is followed by other critics, each with the same aim and method, but with differing judgments, and each one discovers the hymns

## Introduction.

---

that are best—in his opinion. Out of it all comes confusion, and no standard is established but the fluctuating one of personal preference.

And now, when an interest in hymns is so widely felt, is a good time to insist that the quality of a Church hymn cannot be determined in that way. The hymn is the people's share in God's praise, and is intended for congregational use. It can be tested only by the results of actual use in the worship of the Church; and to propose any other test (such as the opinions of critics) is, again, to confound literature with liturgics. In the case of an untried hymn, no man can say that it will prove to be "a good hymn." In the case of hymns that have been fully offered to the Church, and set before her to sing, and yet have failed to attain any real position in her hymnody, that result may be said to mark the end of their career as hymns. Such hymns, having been actually tried by the only competent tribunal, have, for some reason or other, possibly for none that is quite apparent, been found wanting. Here and there a hymn-book editor, with a happy knack, may light upon one of them which he thinks has not had a

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

fair trial, and he may even start it upon a new career, mated to some tune that shall help it at last to win its way to the hearts of God's worshippers. But this is not to change the tribunal which decides the ultimate fate of all hymns. It is only to gain a new hearing before that same tribunal in the specific case. And from the decision of that tribunal there is no appeal in the matter of hymns.

A good hymn is one that commends itself to the Church, voices the religious feeling of the worshippers, and stands the test of congregational use. And just because God's people in all the different branches of the Church make but one larger congregation, with common needs and feelings, therefore the only hymns we are entitled to call "the best Church hymns" are those which commend themselves to this larger congregation, and have come into actual use over the widest area, and by consent of the largest number of Christians in the different Churches. A so-called gospel hymn, which has temporary vogue in certain quarters, but which the great bodies of Christians reject from their worship, is not one of the best hymns. A wooden translation from the Latin, dear to the advanced section of the Anglican

## Introduction.

---

Church, is not one of the best hymns. Neither are our own personal favorites necessarily entitled to that distinction, which only the Church at large can confer.

If, then, the Church alone decides which hymns are the best, and her decision is necessarily final, what remains to us is the simple finding of the individual hymns which, as a matter of fact, have won widest approval and largest use. It would be interesting in several ways if we could pick them out of the mass, if we could get before us a group of hymns which, according to our definition, are beyond a doubt "the best Church hymns."

The only practicable way of doing this is by the study of the hymn-books in present use in the Churches. These books, in the case of each denomination, are the last of a series which have been successively used there. They have grown up by a slow process of dealing with hymns, by way of selection and addition. They contain all the hymns now actually sung in their worship. By taking the whole number of these hymn-books, then, we have the entire body of hymns in actual use in the Church worship of English-speaking Christians. And, by collating their contents, we could determine

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

what hymns are common to a smaller or greater number of books. Giving to each book one vote, the number of books in which a given hymn is found would determine the status of that hymn in the whole English-speaking Church, and we should finally arrive at a group of hymns which, being found in the widest actual use, are properly called "the best Church hymns."

This collation, however fascinating, is a painful task. Fortunately it has been largely done for us already.

1. Dr. Robert Ellis Thompson\* has made such a collation of thirty representative hymn-books of the different bodies of Christians in the United States, "certifying which hymns have received the votes of the seven chief Churches of American Protestantism." These hymns, one hundred and fifty-four in number, are our American candidates for the distinction of being the best hymns.

---

\* The National Hymn-book of the American Churches: comprising the hymns which are common to the hymnaries of the Baptists, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Reformed, with the most usual tunes. Edited by Robert Ellis Thompson, S.T.D. Philadelphia: John D. Wattles, 1893.

## Introduction.

---

2. Mr. King\* has done a like work for the Anglican Church, collating fifty-two collections chosen as representative of the hymn-books used in that Church, and its branches in Scotland, Ireland, and the Colonies.† His list of hymns, as representing at once the English and the liturgical points of view, may be set against Dr. Thompson's. It will then appear that out of Dr. Thompson's one hundred and fifty-four hymns, forty-eight are not found in Mr. King's list, reducing the number of our candidates to one hundred and six.

3. These two collations I have supplemented by a third, covering one recent Church of England collection, twelve representative books used in the Church of Scotland and in the Nonconformist Churches of England, Scotland, and Canada, and twelve important American

---

\* Anglican Hymnology. Being an account of the 325 standard hymns of the highest merit according to the verdict of the whole Anglican Church. By James King, M.A. London: Hatchards, Picadilly, 1885.

† For some unexplained reason, Mr. King has included among his fifty-two books several which are Nonconformist in origin and use. In some other respects his choice of books is not altogether satisfactory; but owing to the proposed revision of several of the most important collections, the time has not yet come to make a fresh collation of Anglican hymnals.

## The Best Church Hymns.

books published, most of them, since the date of Dr. Thompson's list.\*

The whole number of books collated is thus brought up to one hundred and seven. As we are seeking the hymns in widest use only, we may take eighty per cent. as the proportion of books in which a given hymn must occur to attain the first rank ; and we then find no less

---

\*The titles of the collections collated by Mr. King and Dr. Thompson may be found in their respective books. It is proper, however, that the names of those included in this newer collation should here be given.

- Anglican*—Bell and Fox's "Church of England Hymnal";  
*Scottish*—"The Scottish Hymnal," "The Free Church Hymnal," "The Presbyterian Hymnal";  
*English Baptist*—"The Baptist Hymnal," Spurgeon's, "Psalms and Hymns";  
*English Congregational*—Allon's, Horder's, "The Congregational Church Hymnal";  
*English Presbyterian*—"Church Praise";  
*Canadian Presbyterian*—"The Book of Praise";  
*English Methodist*—"The Methodist Hymn-book";  
*American Presbyterian*—"The Hymnal" of 1895, "The Chapel Hymnal," "Hymns of the Ages";  
*American Baptist*—"Sursum Corda";  
*American Congregational*—"The Hymnal for use in Congregational Churches";  
*American Methodist*—"Hymn-book of M. E. Church" (South);  
*American Episcopalian*—"The Hymnal" of 1892;  
*American Independent Collections*—"The New Laudes Domini," "The Plymouth Hymnal," "The Coronation Hymnal," "In Excelsis," "Church Hymns and Gospel Songs."

## Introduction.

than thirty-two of our one hundred and six hymns fulfilling that requirement. In view of the diversities of creed, ritual, and taste represented in these hymn-books, this is a remarkable result. It seems not unreasonable or unsafe to say that at the present time we may call these thirty-two "the best Church hymns."

The following list gives their first lines and the number of votes for each :

1. Rock of Ages, cleft for me (106).
2. When I survey the wondrous cross (104).
3. Jesus, Lover of my soul (104).
4. All praise to Thee, my God, this night (103).
5. Jesus, I my cross have taken (103).
6. Sun of my soul, Thou Saviour dear (103).
7. Awake, my soul, and with the sun (101).
8. Hark! the herald angels sing (101).
9. Abide with me : fast falls the eventide (101).
10. Jerusalem, my happy home (101).
11. How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds (101).
12. Nearer, my God, to Thee (100).
13. From Greenland's icy mountains (100).
14. Our God, our Help in ages past (100).
15. Jerusalem the golden (99).
16. Lo! He comes with clouds descending (94).
17. Jesus shall reign where'er the sun (94).
18. Glorious things of thee are spoken (93).
19. Hark the glad sound! the Saviour comes (92).

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

20. Come, let us join our cheerful songs (92).
21. All hail the power of Jesus' Name (92).
22. Hail to the Lord's Anointed (91).
23. O worship the King (91).
24. Christ the Lord is risen to-day (90).
25. Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah (90).
26. Just as I am, without one plea (90).
27. God moves in a mysterious way (90).
28. Jesus, the very thought of Thee (89).
29. Children of the heavenly King (87).
30. There is a land of pure delight (87).
31. Thou whose almighty word (86).
32. Brief life is here our portion (86).

We may read this list with much satisfaction, with a new confidence also in the tribunal which gave such a decision. Time will work changes in this list, but it seems likely that they will be by way of addition rather than of subtraction. Heber's "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty!" and Newman's "Lead, kindly Light," for instance, will, apparently very soon, range with these others. But of the thirty-two, few, indeed, seem likely to be superseded in our time. None could now be spared. A competent editor of a hymn-book for Church use at the present time would hesitate before omitting any one of them. They are indeed the best Church hymns.

## Introduction.

---

And now that we have them clearly before us, two uses of this list suggest themselves.

1. A duty is suggested to those who are concerned in the conduct of public worship.—The leader of public worship has few responsibilities greater than the choice of hymns to be sung. The influence of familiar hymns is very great, and these certainly would seem to be the hymns that should become familiar by a reasonably frequent use.

2. An opportunity is suggested to those who are interested in the religious training of childhood.—How could more be done for the spiritual enrichment of a child than by storing its memory with the best hymns? If the good old custom of memorizing hymns has fallen into abeyance, it may have been from the embarrassment of riches, the discouraging length of the list of available hymns. But here is a short list of the best only, presenting a task not too great for the average scholar, making frequent review possible, and offering a treasure which will grow only the greater as life lengthens out, and until its close.

“It is not surely a thought to be lightly passed over,” as Mr. Ellerton has said; “it is not without a lesson of deep significance for

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

us all, that our Divine Master sustained His spirit upon His awful deathbed, not with any new utterance of devotion, not with aspirations coming fresh from the lips of Him who spake as never man spake, but with the familiar words of His Church's Psalmody, the broken fragments of the Hymnal of His Childhood.'

It will be of interest also to examine the hymns included in our list, so as to gain an impression of what the qualities are which make up the standard of a hymn that the Church approves and loves to use.

## II.

# What is to-day the Standard of the Best Church Hymns?

---

We have now reached an understanding as to what may rightly be called "The best Church hymns." We have seen that, while every one is at liberty to choose the hymns that are best to him, only the Church decides which are the best Church hymns. The Church hymn is intended for Church use, and the best hymns are those which do, as a matter of fact, fulfil that use; those, in other words, which have won the widest approval and use by the Church.

We have before us a list of the thirty-two best hymns. What remains is to examine the characteristics of these hymns, so as to gain an answer to the question, What is to-day the standard of the best Church hymns?

Of these thirty-two hymns, only two are

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

of the seventeenth century,—Bishop Ken's "Awake, my soul, and with the sun," and his "All praise to Thee, my God, this night."

Of the eighteenth century, Dr. Watts leads with five,—“When I survey the wondrous cross,” “Our God, our Help in ages past,” “Come, let us join our cheerful songs,” “Jesus shall reign where'er the sun,” and “There is a land of pure delight.” Charles Wesley follows with four,—“Jesus, Lover of my soul,” “Hark! the herald angels sing,” “Christ the Lord is risen to-day,” and “Lo! He comes with clouds descending.” John Newton, with two,—“How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds,” and “Glorious things of thee are spoken.” And these others with one each: Toplady, “Rock of Ages”; Doddridge, “Hark the glad sound! the Saviour comes”; Perronet, “All hail the power of Jesus' Name”; Cowper, “God moves in a mysterious way”; Williams, “Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah”; and Cennick, “Children of the heavenly King.”

Of the nineteenth century, Lyte leads with two: “Abide with me,” and “Jesus, I my cross have taken”; and these writers have one each: Keble, “Sun of my soul”; Adams,

## Introduction.

---

“Nearer, my God, to Thee” ; Heber, “From Greenland’s icy mountains” ; Montgomery, “Hail to the Lord’s Anointed” ; Grant, “O worship the King” ; Marriott, “Thou whose almighty word” ; Elliott, “Just as I am” ; and the anonymous recast of an older hymn, “Jerusalem, my happy home.”

Of the nineteenth century also are three versions of Latin hymns : Neale’s “Jerusalem the golden,” and “Brief life is here our portion” ; and Caswall’s “Jesus, the very thought of Thee.”

The first thing the reading of this list suggests is the catholicity of the Church’s judgment ; for Roman, Anglican, Independent, Moravian, Wesleyan, and Unitarian, alike, are allowed to contribute to it. The Church’s unity, indeed, is foreshadowed in her hymnody.

One is impressed also with the absence from this list of all recent hymns. The latest of them was in print by 1851. At first, this would seem to indicate the judgment of the Church that in hymnody “the old is better.” But the fact is rather that a hymn makes its way slowly ; and naturally it takes a great while for any hymn to attain a use so general and widespread, and among so many branches of the Church.

## The Best Church Hymns.

1. Seeking now the characteristics of these "best Church hymns," we may begin with their lyrical quality. They are adapted for setting to music and singing. With the exception, perhaps, of Watts's "Jesus shall reign," you would choose to sing them rather than to read them. We put this lyrical quality first, as most naturally to be expected of a hymn. But, historically, it was by no means the first to be insisted upon. Our fathers began with versions of the Psalms which were anything but lyrical, and the hymns which succeeded them were often hardly more singable. Some of these linger yet. Watts's "Go, preach My gospel" is as honest prose as man ever wrote. And in the case of a class of hymns, such as "'Tis a point I long to know" and "How sad our state by nature is," nothing but an inherited tradition could account for a proposal to sing any one of them. Gradually, with the growth of musical feeling, the heavy hymns are being left behind. Already the Church has decided that only lyrics can find a place among the best hymns.

2. We note again the literary excellence of all these hymns. No less than eleven of the thirty-two are included by Mr. Palgrave in

## Introduction.

---

his very exclusive "Treasury" as literature, "poetry for poetry's sake"; and three others by Mr. Stedman in his "Victorian Anthology" (including "Nearer, my God, to Thee," the faultiest of them all, but saved, in an art sense, by the beauty of its interwoven refrain). One other, "When I survey," etc., Matthew Arnold considered the finest hymn in the language. And of the remainder, representing such writers as Wesley, Watts, Heber, Montgomery, Cowper, Caswall, Neale, and Grant, there is none without distinct literary merit.

Analyzing this literary excellence, we find that each one has a single theme, giving unity to the hymn; and a proper development of it, giving life and movement to the verses (the weaker and less sung verses of "Jesus, Lover of my soul" being an exception). These themes are poetically sound, and their treatment is interesting. The language is refined and beautiful, the images happy (with an occasional lapse, as in the unfortunate "stony griefs" of "Nearer, my God, to Thee"). And in all, and over all, that winning grace of simplicity. Simplicity always stands for much, but in a hymn, which must have the gift of a

## The Best Church Hymns.

quick appeal to many differing minds, simplicity stands for fundamentals.

Literary excellence, then, is a marked common feature of the best hymns. This means that the Church at large has not accepted a hymn of inferior literary qualities, and in view of the advance of general culture, it leaves the very comfortable assurance that she never will.

3. We note again that each of these hymns has liturgical propriety, both in the subject matter and in the form. They keep within the subjects proper to public devotions, but within that limit they range freely through the whole sphere of worship. Now, praise is the chief act of worship, but it is by no means the only one. Prayer is an act of worship, and the expression of our aspirations is an act of worship. These hymns include both. The element of praise is not quite absent from any one of them, perhaps, but not many could be classed as technically hymns of praise. This fact has its own importance just now; for, in the reaction from the use of sentimental and egotistical hymns that make much of ourselves and little of God and His Christ, quite a party has grown up which maintains that the only proper theme of a hymn is the adoration and

## Introduction.

---

praise of God. Didactics and invitation, supplication and intercession, they say, are provided for elsewhere in the service, and they would return to the definition of St. Augustine, that hymns are "the praises of God with song." Welcome as is the reaction, the movement, while in the right direction, is too radical. It needs to be corrected by the verdict of the Church. And this verdict must settle the liturgical office of a hymn. A good hymn is not necessarily a form of pure praise, but rather a form of worship, and it may take its theme from any of the proper parts of public worship.

Let us go now a little deeper, to look for the spiritual qualities which have given these hymns so long a life, so universal acceptance. These seem especially to be two. One of them is reverence, and the other is reality.

4. That tone of reverence pervades every one of these hymns. It sounds all the way from the majestic heights of Watts's "Our God, our Help in ages past," which celebrates His eternity and unchangeableness, to the familiar levels of Ken's morning and evening hymns, in which the little things of life are brought into that same august Presence. Any one can test this quality of reverence for himself, in

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

several ways. The most natural way would be to read or sing the hymns over, and observe the effect upon himself, how that they clothe his own mood with reverence. Another way, more effective, if one cared to try it, were that of singing any of these hymns to trivial melodies, in rapid time and with careless manner. But the test is rather that one would not care to do that. The quality of the hymn makes the performance irreverent.

And it is, no doubt, this quality of reverence which gives to a hymn its hymnic character, makes it suitable for use in the Church's worship. Whether it be directly addressed to God, or whether it be in the form of praise or of prayer, is not the real test of the hymn's fitness, but whether it be of the quality of reverence. And just here, just where the best hymns are strong, is where so many of the hymns which are in current evangelistic use begin to fail. They fail in other things, but they begin to fail at the very foundation; for in the worship of God there is no other foundation laid than is already laid,—in reverence. And a hymn may not be so gross as to be irreverent, and yet it may lack reverence,—in conception and in expression, and especially

## Introduction.

---

in the feelings it tends to excite in those who sing or hear it. A hymn may lack reverence, but a good hymn cannot lack it. The best hymns are thrilled with it through and through.

5. Then there is that other of these deeper qualities which are common to all our group, the quality of spiritual reality. It has two sides,—one turned outward toward the world of things spiritual, the side of truth, and one turned inward toward spiritual experience, the side of sincerity. And only so would God be worshipped,—in sincerity and in truth. A hymn, therefore, as an acceptable act of worship, must be true to facts and must be sincerely spoken by the singers.

There are untrue hymns; and an untrue hymn is no better because the misrepresentations are veiled under poetic diction. Addison's "How are Thy servants blessed, O Lord," (in the altered form as used in the hymn-books) and Draper's "Ye Christian heralds, go proclaim" (as generally used, in the original text), are examples of untrue hymns. And there are many hymns which, put into the mouths of an ordinary congregation, are quite insincere,—the hymns, for example, which express a desire for immediate death, or, more

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

generally, which say to God things which the singers do not feel or do not believe. A congregation will sing such hymns thoughtlessly, if they are set to music that is seductive; but certainly it is a serious responsibility to place such hymns in the Order of Worship.

There are untrue hymns and insincere hymns, but the best Church hymns, as they are now set before us, are neither. They are marked by spiritual reality. They express, that is to say, spiritual truths which are within the people's apprehension, and sound spiritual feelings which are not beyond the experience of the average Christian worshiper. This is true of them in a very marked degree; but are there no exceptions? We turn instinctively to the "New Jerusalem hymns,"—"Jerusalem the golden" and "Jerusalem, my happy home." Canon Kingsley protested against such hymns as unreal, but surely it is carrying "the manly and robust" type of religion pretty far to exclude aspirations after heaven from our Christian hymnody. It is rather the class of hymns represented by Faber's "O Paradise" that are open to such objection. It is interesting to compare this recast ("Jerusalem, my happy home," probably Montgomery's) with the earlier "O

## Introduction.

---

mother dear, Jerusalem," on which it is based, just to see how the right feeling of the recaster has given reality to what was hardly more than a mood of individualistic transcendentalism, having poetic truth rather than congregational fitness.

This spiritual reality in the substance, and not a mere plural form, is what makes a hymn congregational: which fact has its importance to us who are so often reminded that a good hymn must use the plural forms "we, us, our," and not "I, me, mine." Our list contradicts the dictum. Many of these hymns use the singular pronouns throughout, but they are still the best congregational hymns,—congregational because they express experiences natural and proper to the average Christian. And if they express them in an individual form, they are all the more true to life; for our spiritual experiences also are individual.

With this last note, the answer to our question, What is to-day the standard of our best Church hymns? seems to be complete. These are the five elements which enter into that standard: First, the lyrical quality; second, literary excellence; third, liturgical propriety; fourth, reverence; fifth, spiritual reality.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

It was interesting to discover which hymns are the best ; and, if our examination of them is careful and true, it is an added gain to know what it is that makes them best. The verdict of the Church is conclusive, but it covers only the hymns old enough to have secured a full and wide trial. We are left more to our own judgment in dealing with the great body of more recent hymns, and from that very fact arises the advantage in determining the standard of the hymns known to be the best, so that we may measure the newer candidates for favor by that same standard.

## The Hymns



1 A Living and Dying Prayer for the  
Holiest Believer in the World.

ROCK of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee ;  
Let the water and the blood,  
From Thy riven side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

2 Not the labors of my hands  
Can fulfil Thy law's demands ;  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears for ever flow,  
All for sin could not atone ;  
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

3 Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to Thy cross I cling ;  
Naked, come to Thee for dress,  
Helpless, look to Thee for grace ;  
Foul, I to the fountain fly ;  
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

## The Best Church Hymns.

- 4 While I draw this fleeting breath,  
When my eyelids close in death,  
When I soar to worlds unknown,  
See Thee on Thy judgment throne,  
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee.

This hymn properly stands first, for it has had great power over the minds of men. Its author was an English clergyman, the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, born in 1740. He was a man of feeble body but of intense feelings, and earnestly opposed the Methodist movement in the Church of England (see under No. 3). The hymn was first printed at the end of an article in the number for March, 1776, of the *Gospel Magazine*, of which Toplady was editor. He died in 1778.

[NOTES.—Verse 1, line 1. *Rock of Ages*. Isaiah xxvi, 4, reads (in the margin) "Jehovah is the rock of ages." *Cleft for me*. See Psalm lxxviii, 15.  
Verse 1, line 2. See Exodus xxxiii, 22.  
Verse 1, line 3. See St. John's Gospel xix, 34.  
Verse 4, line 2. Toplady wrote it, "When my eye-strings break in death." It was altered in 1815 by Dr. Cotterill, the editor of a hymn-book.]

## 2 Crucifixion to the World by the Cross of Christ. Gal. vi, 14.

WHEN I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

- 2 Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of Christ my God :  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to His blood.
- 3 See, from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down :  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown ?
- 4 Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small ;  
Love so amazing, so Divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.
- 

A great literary critic (Matthew Arnold) thought this the finest hymn in the English language. It was written by Dr. Isaac Watts, a prominent Independent clergyman of England; born 1674, died 1748. Dr. Watts set himself to improve the character of the hymns used in dissenting churches. In 1707-09 he published a book containing 365 of his hymns, of which this is one; and in 1719 another volume of free versions or "Imitations" of the Psalms. They became very popular, and for a long time no other hymns than those of Dr. Watts were sung in a great many churches in England and this country. He is often called "the Father of English Hymnody."

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

This hymn is founded on the text in Galatians referred to in its title. The thought in both hymn and text is that "worldliness dies in my heart when I look on the world's Maker dead for me on the cross."

There were five verses in the hymn as Dr. Watts published it, one of which is generally omitted.

---

### 3 In Temptation.

JESUS, Lover of my soul,  
Let me to Thy bosom fly,  
While the nearer waters roll,  
While the tempest still is high :  
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,  
Till the storm of life is past ;  
Safe into the haven guide,  
O receive my soul at last.

- 2 Other refuge have I none ;  
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee ;  
Leave, ah ! leave me not alone,  
Still support and comfort me.  
All my trust on Thee is stayed,  
All my help from Thee I bring ;  
Cover my defenceless head  
With the shadow of Thy wing.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

- 3 Wilt Thou not regard my call ?  
Wilt Thou not accept my prayer ?  
Lo, I sink, I faint, I fall !  
Lo, on Thee I cast my care ;  
Reach me out Thy gracious hand !  
While I of Thy strength receive,  
Hoping against hope I stand,  
Dying, and behold I live !
- 4 Thou, O Christ, art all I want ;  
More than all in Thee I find :  
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,  
Heal the sick, and lead the blind.  
Just and holy is Thy Name ;  
I am all unrighteousness ;  
False and full of sin I am,  
Thou art full of truth and grace.
- 5 Plenteous grace with Thee is found,  
Grace to cover all my sin ;  
Let the healing streams abound ;  
Make and keep me pure within.  
Thou of life the Fountain art,  
Freely let me take of Thee ;  
Spring Thou up within my heart,  
Rise to all eternity.

---

Of all hymns in the English language this, no doubt,  
is loved the best. It was written in 1740 by the Rev.

## The Best Church Hymns.

Charles Wesley; born 1707, died 1788. He was a clergyman of the Church of England, and took an active part in the Methodist movement, in which his brother John was the leader, and out of which all the Methodist churches have grown. The Wesleys put great faith in the power of hymns to teach religious truths to the people and to reach their hearts. Charles Wesley wrote more than 6000 hymns. Some were printed in hymn-books to be sung at the Methodist meetings, and some in tracts to be read and committed to memory at home. He was among the greatest of all hymn writers, and many of his hymns are sung in all branches of the Church.

[NOTE.—Verse 1, line 3. *Nearer waters.* 'In a wide expanse of waters a distant part may be lashed into fury by a passing storm, whilst around a given ship there is perfect calm. Or the nearer waters may be affected, while the distant waters are sleeping in the silent air. In life, as in nature, storms are local. And men cry for help, not against distant dangers, but out of their immediate troubles. Their life is amid "the nearer waters" of temptations, and to them the *Lover* of souls is indispensable.' J. Julian.]

### 4 An Evening Hymn.

ALL praise to Thee, my God, this  
night,  
For all the blessings of the light ;  
Keep me, O keep me, King of kings,  
Beneath Thy own almighty wings.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

- 2 Forgive me, Lord, for Thy dear Son,  
The ill that I this day have done ;  
That with the world, myself, and Thee,  
I, ere I sleep, at peace may be.
- 3 Teach me to live, that I may dread  
The grave as little as my bed ;  
To die, that this vile body may  
Rise glorious at the awful day.
- 4 O may my soul on Thee repose,  
And with sweet sleep mine eyelids close ;  
Sleep that may me more vigorous make  
To serve my God when I awake.
- 5 When in the night I sleepless lie,  
My soul with heavenly thoughts supply ;  
Let no ill dreams disturb my rest,  
No powers of darkness me molest.
- 6 O when shall I in endless day  
For ever chase dark sleep away,  
And hymns with the supernal choir  
Incessant sing, and never tire !

---

This hymn, as also No. 7, was written more than two centuries ago by Thomas Ken. He was born in 1637, was educated at Winchester College and Oxford, and became a clergyman. We do not know just when he wrote the hymns, but he printed them in a little book of

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

prayers he made for the scholars at Winchester. Ken was a good man in a bad time. His holy life shines like "a good deed in a naughty world." He was made Bishop of Bath and Wells by King Charles II, who respected him because he was brave. But his life was filled with troubles until he died in 1711. His morning and evening hymns still live in millions of hearts. There are 12 verses in all in this hymn.

[NOTES.—Verse 1, line 4. See Psalms xvii, 8; xxxvi, 7.  
Verse 3, line 3. *Vile body*. "Vile" is used in the older sense of "held in little esteem" (that is, as compared with the "glorious" resurrection body).  
Verse 6, line 3. *Supernal*, that is, heavenly.]

---

### 5 "Lo! we have left all, and followed Thee."

JESUS, I my cross have taken,  
All to leave, and follow Thee;  
Destitute, despised, forsaken,  
Thou, from hence, my all shalt be:  
Perish every fond ambition,  
All I've sought, or hoped, or known;  
Yet how rich is my condition,  
God and heaven are still my own.

2 Man may trouble and distress me,  
'Twill but drive me to Thy breast;  
Life with trials hard may press me,  
Heaven will bring me sweeter rest:

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

- O 'tis not in grief to harm me  
While Thy love is left to me ;  
O 'twere not in joy to charm me,  
Were that joy unmixed with Thee.
- 3 Take, my soul, thy full salvation,  
Rise o'er sin and fear and care ;  
Joy to find in every station  
Something still to do or bear ;  
Think what Spirit dwells within thee,  
What a Father's smile is thine,  
What a Saviour died to win thee :  
Child of heaven, shouldst thou repine ?
- 4 Haste, then, on from grace to glory,  
Armed by faith, and winged by prayer ;  
Heaven's eternal day's before thee,  
God's own hand shall guide thee there.  
Soon shall close thy earthly mission ;  
Swift shall pass thy pilgrim days ;  
Hope soon change to glad fruition,  
Faith to sight, and prayer to praise.
- 

This hymn was printed as early as 1824, in six verses ; but it was many years before even the name of the author was known. He was the Rev. Henry Francis Lyte, curate of an English parish made up mostly of fishermen and sailors, and himself a victim of consumption.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

But now every one knows and honors his name, for he wrote not only this beautiful hymn of consecration, but many others, and, best of all, "Abide with me: fast falls the eventide," (see under No. 9).

[NOTE.—Verse 1, line 1. *My cross have taken.* See St. Matthew xvi, 24.]

---

### 6 Evening. St. Luke xxiv, 29.

SUN of my soul, Thou Saviour dear,  
It is not night if Thou be near;  
O may no earth-born cloud arise  
To hide Thee from Thy servant's eyes.

2 When the soft dews of kindly sleep  
My wearied eyelids gently steep,  
Be my last thought, how sweet to rest  
For ever on my Saviour's breast.

3 Abide with me from morn till eve,  
For without Thee I cannot live;  
Abide with me when night is nigh,  
For without Thee I dare not die.

4 If some poor wandering child of Thine  
Have spurned to-day the voice Divine,  
Now, Lord, the gracious work begin;  
Let him no more lie down in sin.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

- 5 Watch by the sick ; enrich the poor  
With blessings from Thy boundless store ;  
Be every mourner's sleep to-night,  
Like infants' slumbers, pure and light.
- 6 Come near and bless us when we wake,  
Ere through the world our way we take,  
Till in the ocean of Thy love  
We lose ourselves in heaven above.
- 

In 1827 the Rev. John Keble, an English clergyman and a true poet, published a book of his verses. He called it "The Christian Year," because it had a poem for each Sunday in the year, and for all other days and times for which his Church appointed services. Our beautiful and familiar hymn is taken from the second poem in that book, called "Evening."

---

## 7 A Morning Hymn.

**A**WAKE, my soul, and with the sun  
Thy daily stage of duty run :  
Shake off dull sloth, and joyful rise  
To pay thy morning sacrifice.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

- 2 Thy precious time misspent redeem ;  
Each present day thy last esteem ;  
Improve thy talent with due care ;  
For the great day thyself prepare.
- 3 By influence of the light Divine  
Let thy own light to others shine ;  
Reflect all heaven's propitious rays  
In ardent love and cheerful praise.
- 4 Wake and lift up thyself, my heart,  
And with the angels bear thy part,  
Who all night long, unwearied, sing  
High praise to the Eternal King.
- 5 All praise to Thee, who safe has kept,  
And hast refreshed me whilst I slept :  
Grant, Lord, when I from death shall  
wake,  
I may of endless light partake.
- 6 Direct, control, suggest, this day,  
All I design, or do, or say ;  
That all my powers, with all their might,  
In Thy sole glory may unite.
- 7 Praise God from whom all blessings flow ;  
Praise Him, all creatures here below ;  
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host :  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

This is the other of Bishop Ken's immortal hymns, spoken of under No. 4. There are 14 verses in all. The last verse (it is the last verse of No. 4 also) is used separately as "The Long-metre Doxology" and is oftener sung than any verse in the language. In *Harper's Magazine* for December, 1897, Richard Harding Davis gives an account of its splendid effect as sung at the Queen's Jubilee open-air service before St. Paul's Cathedral in London in June of that year. "There were ten thousand people singing 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow' as loudly as they could, and with tears running down their faces. There were princesses standing up in their carriages, and black men from the Gold Coast, Maharajahs from India, and red-coated Tommies, and young men who will inherit kingdoms and empires, and archbishops, and cynical old diplomats, and soldiers and sailors from the 'land of the palm and the pine' and from the Seven Seas, and women and men who were just subjects of the Queen and who were content with that. There was probably never before such a moment in which so many races of people, of so many castes, and of such different values to this world, sang praises to God at one time and in one place and with one heart."

---

### 8 Hymn for Christmas-Day.

HARK! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the new-born King;  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled!"

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

Joyful, all ye nations, rise,  
Join the triumph of the skies ;  
With the angelic host proclaim,  
" Christ is born in Bethlehem !"  
Hark ! the herald angels sing,  
" Glory to the new-born King."

2 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 the Incarnate Deity,  
Pleased as man with men to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel.  
Hark ! the herald angels sing,  
" Glory to the new-born King."

3 Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace !  
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness !  
Light and life to all He brings,  
Risen with healing in His wings.  
Mild He lays His glory by,  
Born that man no more may die,  
Born to raise the sons of earth,  
Born to give them second birth.  
Hark ! the herald angels sing,  
" Glory to the new-born King."

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

In 1739 appeared the first of the hymn-books which the Wesleys prepared for the Methodists (see under No. 3). In this book was a Christmas hymn by Charles Wesley, beginning "Hark, how all the welkin rings." From time to time changes were made in the hymn by one editor and another, until in 1810 it took the form here printed, in which it is sung in so many churches at Christmas time.

[NOTES.—Verse 1, line 1. See St. Luke's Gospel ii, 14.  
Verse 2, line 3. *Late in time.* See Hebrews i, 2.  
Verse 2, line 8. *Emmanuel.* See Isaiah vii, 14.]

9 "Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." St. Luke xxiv, 29.

ABIDE with me: fast falls the evening;  
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide:  
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,  
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

2 Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;  
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;  
Change and decay in all around I see;  
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.

## The Best Church Hymns.

- 3 I need Thy presence every passing hour ;  
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power ?  
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be ?  
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.
- 4 I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless :  
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.  
Where is death's sting ? where, grave, thy victory ?  
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.
- 5 Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes ;  
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies :  
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee :  
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

This hymn was written by the Rev. Henry Francis Lyte (see under No. 5) a few weeks before his death, and had eight verses in all. His daughter tells us that on September 4, 1847, he preached for the last time in the village church, having been ordered to a warmer climate as his only chance of living through the winter ; and on the evening of that day he placed the hymn in

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

the hands of one of his family. It is the prayer of one who feels the night of death closing around him, and is not afraid while the Master stays beside him. Mr. Lyte died at Nice, Italy, on the 20th of November following.

---

### 10 The Heavenly Jerusalem.

Rev. xxi and xxii.

JERUSALEM, my happy home,  
Name ever dear to me!  
When shall my labors have an end,  
In joy and peace, and thee?

2 When shall these eyes thy heaven-built  
walls  
And pearly gates behold?  
Thy bulwarks with salvation strong,  
And streets of shining gold?

3 There happier bowers than Eden's bloom,  
Nor sin nor sorrow know:  
Blest seats! through rude and stormy  
scenes  
I onward press to you.

4 Why should I shrink at pain and woe,  
Or feel at death dismay?  
I've Canaan's goodly land in view.  
And realms of endless day.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

- 5 Apostles, martyrs, prophets, there  
    Around my Saviour stand ;  
And soon my friends in Christ below  
    Will join the glorious band.
- 6 Jerusalem, my happy home !  
    My soul still pants for thee :  
Then shall my labors have an end,  
    When I thy joys shall see.
- 

At the British Museum in London there is a manuscript book as old as Queen Elizabeth's time, which contains a copy of a hymn beginning like this one, and it bears the title "A Song Mad[e] by F: B: P. To the tune of Diana." Some one took the words and thoughts of a few verses out of the old hymn, and made them over into this hymn, which was printed about 1796 in a little hymn-book for the use of Eckington Church in England. James Montgomery, the poet, edited the little hymn-book, and very likely it was he who re-wrote the hymn.

---

## 11 The Name of Jesus.

Solomon's Song i, 3.

HOW sweet the Name of Jesus sounds  
    In a believer's ear !  
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,  
    And drives away his fear.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

- 2 It makes the wounded spirit whole,  
And calms the troubled breast ;  
'Tis Manna to the hungry soul,  
And to the weary Rest.
- 3 Dear Name ! the Rock on which I build,  
My Shield and Hiding-place,  
My never-failing Treasury, filled  
With boundless stores of grace ;
- 4 By Thee my prayers acceptance gain,  
Although with sin defiled ;  
Satan accuses me in vain,  
And I am owned a child.
- 5 Jesus, my Shepherd, Brother, Friend,  
My Prophet, Priest, and King,  
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,  
Accept the praise I bring.
- 6 Weak is the effort of my heart,  
And cold my warmest thought ;  
But when I see Thee as Thou art,  
I'll praise Thee as I ought.
- 7 Till then I would Thy love proclaim  
With every fleeting breath ;  
And may the music of Thy Name  
Refresh my soul in death.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

It is touching to think that this hymn (by the Rev. John Newton), so filled with love and tender reverence, was written by one whose earlier life was wild and profligate, who was a deserter from the English navy, and then engaged in the slave-trade. During a terrible storm at sea he turned his back upon that old life, and gave his heart to Christ. Returning to England he was ordained to the ministry in 1764 at the age of thirty-nine, and became curate of the village of Olney. There he became intimate with the poet Cowper, and they both wrote hymns to be sung at weekly prayer meetings which Newton held in an empty house. In 1779, 348 of these hymns were published in a book called "Olney Hymns." 280 of them, including this one, were by Newton, and 68 were by Cowper. Newton lived to be eighty-two years old.

[NOTE.—Verse 5, line 1. *Brother.* Newton wrote it, "Husband."]

---

### 12 Hearer, my God, to Thee.

NEARER, my God, to Thee,  
Nearer to Thee!  
E'en though it be a cross  
That raiseth me;  
Still all my song shall be,  
Nearer, my God, to Thee,  
Nearer to Thee!

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

- 2 Though like the wanderer,  
The sun gone down,  
Darkness be over me,  
My rest a stone ;  
Yet in my dreams I'd be  
Nearer, my God, to Thee,  
Nearer to Thee !
- 3 There let the way appear,  
Steps unto heaven :  
All that Thou send'st to me  
In mercy given :  
Angels to beckon me  
Nearer, my God, to Thee,  
Nearer to Thee !
- 4 Then, with my waking thoughts  
Bright with Thy praise,  
Out of my stony griefs  
Bethel I'll raise ;  
So by my woes to be  
Nearer, my God, to Thee,  
Nearer to Thee !
- 5 Or if on joyful wing  
Cleaving the sky,  
Sun, moon, and stars forgot,  
Upwards I fly,  
Still all my song shall be,  
Nearer, my God, to Thee,  
Nearer to Thee !

## The Best Church Hymns.

An English lady, Mrs. Sarah Flower Adams, wrote this hymn for a hymnal published by her pastor in 1841. She was a good woman, who wore out her own life in ministering to an afflicted sister. She was an Unitarian, which explains why the hymn does not appeal to Christ, whom we love to think of as the Way to God. To understand the 2d, 3d, and 4th verses, it is necessary to know the story of Jacob's dream as told in Genesis xxviii.

[NOTES.—Verse 1, line 3. *A cross.* The cross is a symbol of suffering. And sometimes God uses suffering to draw us nearer to Him by making us feel more humble and dependent upon Him.  
Verse 1, line 5. *Shall.* Mrs. Adams wrote here "would."]

### 13 Before a Collection made for the Society for the Propaga- tion of the Gospel.

FROM Greenland's icy mountains,  
From India's coral strand,  
Where Afric's sunny fountains  
Roll down their golden sand,  
From many an ancient river,  
From many a palmy plain,  
They call us to deliver  
Their land from error's chain.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

- 2 What though the spicy breezes  
Blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle ;  
Though every prospect pleases,  
And only man is vile :  
In vain with lavish kindness  
The gifts of God are strown ;  
The heathen in his blindness  
Bows down to wood and stone.
- 3 Can we, whose souls are lighted  
With wisdom from on high,  
Can we to men benighted  
The lamp of life deny ?  
Salvation ! O salvation !  
The joyful sound proclaim,  
Till each remotest nation  
Has learned Messiah's Name.
- 4 Waft, waft, ye winds, His story,  
And you, ye waters, roll,  
Till like a sea of glory  
It spreads from pole to pole ;  
Till o'er our ransomed nature  
The Lamb for sinners slain,  
Redeemer, King, Creator,  
In bliss returns to reign.
- 

Reginald Heber (born 1783) wrote this stirring hymn one Saturday in 1819 for a missionary service to be held next day at the church in Wrexham, England, of which

## The Best Church Hymns.

his father-in-law was pastor. When he read it aloud, his father-in-law said, "There, that will do very well." And it has done very well ever since. Dr. Theodore Cuyler once said that Heber did more for the spread of the gospel by writing this hymn than if he had founded a Board of Missions. It is only one of many good hymns which Heber wrote. He was afterwards Bishop of Calcutta, where he did noble work for Christ until his death in 1826.

[NOTE.—Verse 3, line 4. *The lamp of life.* See Isaiah lxii, 1. *Deny.* See Romans x, 14.]

---

### 14 Psalm xc, 1=5. First Part. Man Frail and God Eternal.

OUR God, our Help in ages past,  
Our Hope for years to come,  
Our Shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal Home :

2 Under the shadow of Thy throne  
Thy saints have dwelt secure ;  
Sufficient is Thine arm alone,  
And our defence is sure.

3 Before the hills in order stood,  
Or earth received her frame,  
From everlasting Thou art God,  
To endless years the same.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

- 4 A thousand ages in Thy sight  
Are like an evening gone ;  
Short as the watch that ends the night  
Before the rising sun.
- 5 The busy tribes of flesh and blood,  
With all their lives and cares,  
Are carried downwards by Thy flood,  
And lost in following years.
- 6 Time, like an ever-rolling stream,  
Bears all its sons away :  
They fly forgotten, as a dream  
Dies at the opening day.
- 7 Our God, our Help in ages past ;  
Our Hope for years to come ;  
Be Thou our Guard while troubles last,  
And our eternal Home.
- 

This is a part of one of the free versions or "Imitations" of the Psalms (see under No. 2), which Dr. Watts published in 1719. It is one of the very best of all the hymns he wrote. To understand the hymn, it is only necessary to read the earliest verses of the 90th psalm.

15 Jerusalem the Golden.

JERUSALEM the golden,  
With milk and honey blest !  
Beneath thy contemplation  
Sink heart and voice opprest.  
I know not, O I know not,  
What joys await us there ;  
What radiancy of glory,  
What bliss beyond compare.

2 They stand, those halls of Zion,  
All jubilant with song,  
And bright with many an angel,  
And all the martyr throng.  
The Prince is ever in them,  
The daylight is serene ;  
The pastures of the blessed  
Are decked in glorious sheen.

3 There is the throne of David ;  
And there, from care released,  
The song of them that triumph,  
The shout of them that feast ;  
And they, who with their Leader  
Have conquered in the fight,  
For ever and for ever  
Are clad in robes of white.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

- 4 O mine, my golden Zion !  
O lovelier far than gold !  
With laurel-girt battalions,  
And safe, victorious fold :  
O sweet and blessèd country,  
Shall I ever see thy face ?  
O sweet and blessèd country,  
Shall I ever win thy grace ?
- 5 Exult, O dust and ashes,  
The Lord shall be thy part :  
His only and for ever,  
Thou shalt be, and thou art.  
Exult, O dust and ashes,  
The Lord shall be thy part :  
His only and for ever,  
Thou shalt be, and thou art.
- 

In the 12th century Bernard, a monk in the French Abbey of Cluny, wrote a long Latin poem which contrasted the evils of the world with the happiness and beauty of heaven. An English clergyman, Dr. John Mason Neale, in 1851 published a translation of 400 lines of the poem, and from this the verses are taken which make up our hymn. Dr. Neale lived to see the hymn become the most popular of all hymns about heaven. But what pleased him most was to be told that a little child, who was a great sufferer, became so fond of the

## The Best Church Hymns.

verses that he would lie "without a murmur or motion, while the whole 400 lines were read to him."

- [NOTES.—Verse 1, line 1. *The golden.* See Revelation xxi, 18.  
Verse 1, line 2. See Exodus iii, 8.  
Verse 1, line 6. Neale wrote it, "What social joys are there."  
Verse 1, line 8. *What bliss.* Neale wrote it, "what light."  
Verse 2, line 2. *All jubilant.* Neale wrote it, "conjubilant." (None of these changes is an improvement over what Neale wrote, but they are generally accepted now.)  
Verse 3, line 1. See Isaiah ix, 7.  
Verse 5, line 1. *Dust and ashes,* that is, man, who was formed out of the dust and whose body shall be left like ashes when the fire is out. See Genesis xviii, 27.]

### 16 Thy Kingdom Come!

LO! He comes, with clouds descending,  
Once for favored sinners slain;  
Thousand thousand saints attending  
Swell the triumph of His train:  
Alleluia!  
God appears on earth to reign.

- 2 Every eye shall now behold Him,  
Robed in dreadful majesty;  
Those who set at naught and sold Him,  
Pierced, and nailed Him to the Tree,  
Deeply wailing,  
Shall the true Messiah see.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

- 3 Every island, sea, and mountain,  
Heaven and earth, shall flee away ;  
All who hate Him must, confounded,  
Hear the trump proclaim the day ;  
Come to judgment !  
Come to judgment, come away !
- 4 Now Redemption, long expected,  
See in solemn pomp appear !  
All His saints, by man rejected,  
Now shall meet Him in the air :  
Alleluia !  
See the day of God appear !
- 5 Answer Thine own Bride and Spirit ;  
Hasten, Lord, the general doom ;  
The new heaven and earth to inherit  
Take Thy pining exiles home :  
All creation  
Travails, groans, and bids Thee come.
- 6 Yea, Amen ! let all adore Thee,  
High on Thine eternal throne :  
Saviour, take the power and glory ;  
Claim the kingdom for Thine own :  
O come quickly ;  
Alleluia ! come, Lord, come.

## The Best Church Hymns.

Parts of three separate hymns are woven together in this. In 1760 the Rev. Mr. Madan was making a hymn-book for the Church of England, and wished a hymn upon the second coming of Christ. He took these 1st, 2d, and 6th verses from one, and the 5th verse from another hymn of Charles Wesley (see under No. 3), and the 3d and 4th from a hymn by John Cennick (see under No. 29) and then made several changes in them before his hymn suited him. It seems like a strange way of making a hymn; but the hymn is among the best we have on the subject.

[NOTES.—Verse 1, line 1. See Revelation i, 7.  
Verse 5, line 1. *Bride and Spirit.* See Revelation xxii, 17.  
Verse 6, line 5. *O come quickly.* See Revelation xxii, 20.]

### 17 Psalm lxxii. Second Part. Christ's Kingdom among the Gentiles.

JESUS shall reign where'er the sun  
Does his successive journeys run;  
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore  
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

2 For Him shall endless prayer be made,  
And praises throng to crown His head:  
His Name, like sweet perfume, shall rise  
With every morning sacrifice;

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

- 3 People and realms of every tongue  
Dwell on His love with sweetest song ;  
And infant voices shall proclaim  
Their early blessings on His Name.
  
- 4 Blessings abound where'er He reigns ;  
The prisoner leaps to lose his chains,  
The weary find eternal rest,  
And all the sons of want are blest.
  
- 5 Let every creature rise and bring  
Peculiar honors to our King,  
Angels descend with songs again,  
And earth repeat the loud Amen.

---

This is another of the "Imitations" of the Psalms which Dr. Watts published in 1719 (see under No. 2). An incident will best illustrate the meaning of the hymn. One day, in 1862, King George of the South Sea Islands was to give a new constitution to his people, exchanging a heathen for a Christian form of government. "Under the spreading branches of the banyan trees sat some 5000 natives, assembled for Divine worship. Foremost among them all sat King George himself. Around him were seated old chiefs and warriors. But old and young alike rejoiced together in the joys of that day. It would be impossible to describe the deep feeling manifested when the solemn service began by the entire assembly singing the hymn, 'Jesus shall reign where'er the sun.' Who, so

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

much as they, could realize the meaning of the poet's words? For they had been rescued from the darkness of heathenism and cannibalism, and they were that day met for the first time under a Christian constitution, and with Christ himself reigning in the hearts of most of them. That was indeed Christ's kingdom set up in the earth."

### 18 Zion, or the City of God.

Isaiah, Chap. xxxiii, 20, 21.

GLORIOUS things of thee are spoken,  
Zion, city of our God ;  
He whose word cannot be broken  
Formed thee for His own abode :  
On the Rock of Ages founded,  
What can shake thy sure repose ?  
With salvation's walls surrounded,  
Thou mayst smile at all thy foes.

2 See, the streams of living waters,  
Springing from eternal Love,  
Well supply thy sons and daughters,  
And all fear of want remove :  
Who can faint, while such a river  
Ever flows their thirst to assuage ?  
Grace, which, like the Lord the Giver,  
Never fails from age to age.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

- 3 Round each habitation hovering,  
See the cloud and fire appear  
For a glory and a covering,  
Showing that the Lord is near :  
Thus deriving from their banner  
Light by night, and shade by day,  
Safe they feed upon the manna  
Which He gives them when they pray.
- 4 Saviour, if of Zion's city  
I, through grace, a member am,  
Let the world deride or pity,  
I will glory in Thy Name :  
Fading is the worldling's pleasure,  
All his boasted pomp and show ;  
Solid joys and lasting treasure  
None but Zion's children know.
- 

This is another of the hymns which the Rev. John Newton published in "Olney Hymns" (see under No. 11). The poet thinks of the Church of Christ as a great city in which God has His dwelling, and in which all Christians are fellow-citizens. And he thanks God for the privilege and honor of being a member of His Church.

- [NOTES.—Verse 1, line 1. *Spoken.* See Psalm lxxxvii, 3.  
Verse 1, line 4. *His own abode.* See Psalm cxxxii,  
13, 14.  
Verse 1, line 5. *Founded.* See St. Matthew xvi,  
18.  
Verse 1, line 7. *Surrounded.* See Isaiah xxvi, 1.  
Verse 2, line 1. *Streams.* See Psalm xlvi, 4.  
Verse 3, line 2. *Cloud and fire.* See Isaiah iv, 5,  
6.]

19 Christ's Message, from Luke iv, 18, 19.

HARK, the glad sound! the Saviour  
comes,  
The Saviour promised long :  
Let every heart prepare a throne,  
And every voice a song.

2 On Him the Spirit, largely poured,  
Exerts its sacred fire ;  
Wisdom and might, and zeal and love,  
His holy breast inspire.

3 He comes, the prisoners to release  
In Satan's bondage held ;  
The gates of brass before Him burst,  
The iron fetters yield.

4 He comes, from the thick films of vice  
To clear the mental ray,  
And on the eye-balls of the blind  
To pour celestial day.

5 He comes, the broken heart to bind,  
The bleeding soul to cure ;  
And with the treasures of His grace  
To enrich the humble poor.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

6 Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,  
Thy welcome shall proclaim ;  
And heaven's eternal arches ring  
With Thy belovèd Name.

The Rev. Dr. Philip Doddridge (born 1702, died 1751) wrote this hymn, but it was never printed till after his death. He was a great friend of Dr. Watts, and wrote very many hymns, of which this perhaps is the best. It is a song of welcome to greet the coming (advent) of Christ to be our Saviour;—just as if the poet had been present in the Nazareth Synagogue when Jesus read the prophet's words about Himself, and the poet had taken those words from His mouth and made them into a song. (See St. Luke iv, 18, 19.)

---

20 Christ Jesus the Lamb of God,  
worshipped by all the Cre=  
ation. Rev. v, 11, 12, 13.

COME, let us join our cheerful songs  
With angels round the throne ;  
Ten thousand thousand are their tongues,  
But all their joys are one.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

- 2 "Worthy the Lamb that died," they cry,  
"To be exalted thus :"  
"Worthy the Lamb," our lips reply,  
"For He was slain for us."
- 3 Jesus is worthy to receive  
Honor and power Divine ;  
And blessings, more than we can give,  
Be, Lord, for ever Thine.
- 4 Let all that dwell above the sky,  
And air, and earth, and seas,  
Conspire to lift Thy glories high,  
And speak Thine endless praise.
- 5 The whole creation join in one,  
To bless the sacred Name  
Of Him that sits upon the throne,  
And to adore the Lamb.
- 

This is another of Dr. Watts's hymns (see under No. 2). He calls upon us to join in the worship of the angels about God's throne in heaven, of which St. John tells us in the verses from Revelation referred to in the title of the hymn.

21 On the Resurrection—The Lord  
is King.

ALL hail the power of Jesus' Name!  
Let angels prostrate fall;  
Bring forth the royal diadem,  
And crown Him Lord of all.

2 Crown Him, ye morning stars of light,  
Who fixed this floating ball;  
Now hail the strength of Israel's might,  
And crown Him Lord of all.

3 Crown Him, ye martyrs of your God  
Who from His altar call;  
Extol the Stem of Jesse's rod,  
And crown Him Lord of all.

4 Ye seed of Israel's chosen race,  
Ye ransomed of the fall,  
Hail Him who saves you by His grace,  
And crown Him Lord of all.

5 Sinners, whose love can ne'er forget  
The wormwood and the gall,  
Go, spread your trophies at His feet,  
And crown Him Lord of all.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

- 6 Let every kindred, every tribe,  
On this terrestrial ball,  
To Him all majesty ascribe,  
And crown Him Lord of all.
- 7 O that with yonder sacred throng  
We at His feet may fall ;  
We'll join the everlasting song,  
And crown Him Lord of all.
- 

This is often called "The Coronation Hymn." It appeared in the *Gospel Magazine* for April, 1780, and was written by Edward Perronet. He was born in 1726, was brought up in the Church of England, and became one of John Wesley's helpers (see under No. 3). Afterward he was pastor of an Independent church in Canterbury, where he died in 1792, and was buried in the cloisters of the famous Cathedral. In life he was full of fire and enthusiasm, and some of it burns yet in his spirited hymn. The 6th verse, as almost always sung now, and as printed here, was a good deal changed from what Perronet wrote by an editor, Dr. Rippon, in 1787, and he added this 7th verse to the hymn.

[NOTES.—Verse 3, line 3. See Isaiah xi, 1.  
Verse 5, line 2. See Jeremiah ix, 15.]

22 The Reign of Christ on Earth.

Psalm lxxii.

HAIL to the Lord's Anointed,  
Great David's greater Son!  
Hail, in the time appointed,  
His reign on earth begun!  
He comes to break oppression,  
To set the captive free,  
To take away transgression,  
And rule in equity.

2 He shall come down like showers  
Upon the fruitful earth;  
And love, joy, hope, like flowers,  
Spring in His path to birth;  
Before Him on the mountains  
Shall peace, the herald, go,  
And righteousness, in fountains,  
From hill to valley flow.

3 Kings shall fall down before Him,  
And gold and incense bring;  
All nations shall adore Him,  
His praise all people sing;  
For He shall have dominion  
O'er river, sea, and shore,  
Far as the eagle's pinion  
Or dove's light wing can soar.

## The Best Church Hymns.

- 4 For Him shall prayer unceasing  
And daily vows ascend ;  
His kingdom still increasing,  
A kingdom without end :  
The mountain dews shall nourish  
A seed in weakness sown,  
Whose fruit shall spread and flourish,  
And shake like Lebanon.
- 5 O'er every foe victorious,  
He on His throne shall rest,  
From age to age more glorious,  
All blessing and all-blest :  
The tide of time shall never  
His covenant remove,  
His Name shall stand for ever,—  
That Name to us is Love.

James Montgomery, the author of this hymn, was born in 1771, and was for many years editor of a newspaper in Sheffield, England. He was also quite celebrated as a poet. His poems are not much read now, but some of his hymns are among the best we have. This one was written in 1821, and Montgomery used sometimes to recite it at the close of a speech at a public missionary meeting. It was very appropriate at such a time, because like the 72d Psalm (of which it is an imitation) it draws a picture of the glad time when Christ's kingdom shall cover all the earth.

[NOTE.—Verse 4, line 8. *Like Lebanon*, that is, like the great trees on Mt. Lebanon, shaken in the wind.]

23

Psalm civ.

- O WORSHIP the King all glorious  
above,  
O gratefully sing His power and His  
love ;  
Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of  
days,  
Pavilioned in splendor, and girded with  
praise.
- 2 O tell of His might, O sing of His grace,  
Whose robe is the light, whose canopy  
space.  
His chariots of wrath the deep thunder-  
clouds form,  
And dark is His path on the wings of  
the storm.
- 3 The earth with its store of wonders un-  
told,  
Almighty, Thy power hath founded of  
old ;  
Hath established it fast by a changeless  
decree,  
And round it hath cast, like a mantle,  
the sea.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

- 4 Thy bountiful care what tongue can  
recite ?  
It breathes in the air ; it shines in the  
light ;  
It streams from the hills ; it descends to  
the plain ;  
And sweetly distils in the dew and the  
rain.
- 5 Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,  
In Thee do we trust, nor find Thee to fail ;  
Thy mercies how tender, how firm to the  
end,  
Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and  
Friend !
- 6 O measureless Might ! Ineffable Love !  
While angels delight to hymn Thee above,  
The humbler creation, though feeble their  
lays,  
With true adoration shall lisp to Thy  
praise.
- 

This hymn gives us some of the thoughts about God's greatness and love that are contained in the 104th Psalm. It was written by Sir Robert Grant, who in 1834 was appointed English Governor of Bombay (India), and died there in 1838.

24 Hymn for Easter-Day.

“CHRIST the Lord is risen to-day,”  
Sons of men and angels say :  
Raise your joys and triumphs high ;  
Sing, ye heavens, and earth, reply.

2 Vain the stone, the watch, the seal ;  
Christ has burst the gates of hell :  
Death in vain forbids His rise ;  
Christ has opened Paradise.

3 Lives again our glorious King :  
Where, O death, is now thy sting ?  
Once He died, our souls to save :  
Where thy victory, O grave ?

4 Soar we now where Christ has led,  
Following our exalted Head :  
Made like Him, like Him we rise ;  
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies.

5 Hail the Lord of earth and heaven !  
Praise to Thee by both be given :  
Thee we greet triumphant now :  
Hail, the Resurrection Thou !

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

This is a part of one of the hymns of Charles Wesley, and was printed in the same book as his Christmas Hymn, No. 8.

[NOTES.—Verse 3, line 3. Wesley wrote it, "Dying once He all doth save."  
Verse 5, line 4. *The Resurrection Thou!* See St. John's Gospel xi, 25. "Jesus said unto her, I *am* the resurrection."] 

---

### 25 Praying for Strength.

GUIDE me, O Thou Great Jehovah,  
Pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,  
Hold me with Thy powerful hand:  
Bread of heaven,  
Feed me till I want no more.

2 Open now the crystal fountain,  
Whence the healing stream doth flow;  
Let the fire and cloudy pillar  
Lead me all my journey through:  
Strong Deliverer,  
Be Thou still my Strength and Shield.

3 When I tread the verge of Jordan,  
Bid my anxious fears subside;  
Death of deaths and hell's Destruction,  
Land me safe on Canaan's side:  
Songs of praises  
I will ever give to Thee.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

This hymn was first written in the Welsh language by the Rev. William Williams, a clergyman of Wales, and was printed in his Book of Hymns in 1745. About twenty-seven years afterward he printed this English version of his hymn, the first verse of it made by his brother, the other verses by himself. The writer thinks of our life as a march across the desert to the better land, like that journey of the Israelites of which we read in Exodus; and he thinks of God as leading us and feeding us now as He did His people then.

[NOTES.—Verse 1, line 5. *Bread of heaven.* See Exodus xvi, 14, 15, and St. John's Gospel vi, 31-35.  
Verse 2, lines 1, 2. See Exodus xvii, 6.  
Verse 3, line 3. "*Death of deaths, and hell's Destruction.*" These words are titles given to God: He can put an end to the power of death and of hell.]

---

26 "Him that cometh unto me, I will  
in no wise cast out." John vi, 37.

JUST as I am, without one plea  
But that Thy blood was shed for me,  
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come.

2 Just as I am, and waiting not  
To rid my soul of one dark blot,  
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each  
spot,  
O Lamb of God, I come.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

- 3 Just as I am, though tossed about  
With many a conflict, many a doubt,  
Fightings and fears within, without,  
O Lamb of God, I come.
- 4 Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind ;  
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,  
Yea, all I need, in Thee to find,  
O Lamb of God, I come.
- 5 Just as I am ! Thou wilt receive,  
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve ;  
Because Thy promise I believe,  
O Lamb of God, I come.
- 6 Just as I am ! Thy love unknown  
Has broken every barrier down ;  
Now, to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,  
O Lamb of God, I come.
- 

The authoress of this hymn, Miss Charlotte Elliott, of Brighton, England, was born in 1789, and was an invalid nearly all her life till her death in 1871. This is one of several hymns she wrote for a little book she made in 1836, intended to help and comfort other sick people. She never dreamed that it would come to be loved by everybody.

## 27 Light Shining out of Darkness.

GOD moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform ;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.

2 Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never-failing skill  
He treasures up His bright designs,  
And works His sovereign will.

3 Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take ;  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head.

4 Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His grace ;  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.

5 His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour ;  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower.

6 Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
And scan His work in vain ;  
God is His own Interpreter,  
And He will make it plain.

## The Best Church Hymns.

The famous poet William Cowper (born 1731, died 1800) wrote this hymn straight from the heart. It was first printed in 1774 in a little book of "Letters on Religious Subjects," which Cowper's friend, John Newton, published while they were living together at Olney (see under No. 11). There are times in the life of every one when the ways of God's providence seem dark and hard to understand. But Cowper's lot was made particularly hard by brain trouble which made him subject to fits of insanity. Under the shadow of one of these dreadful attacks he wrote this hymn of trust in God's providence.

---

### 28 The Most Holy Name of Jesus.

JESUS, the very thought of Thee  
With sweetness fills my breast ;  
But sweeter far Thy face to see,  
And in Thy presence rest.

2 Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame,  
Nor can the memory find,  
A sweeter sound than Thy blest Name,  
O Saviour of mankind.

3 O Hope of every contrite heart,  
O Joy of all the meek,  
To those who fall, how kind Thou art !  
How good to those who seek !

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

4 But what to those who find? Ah, this  
Nor tongue nor pen can show :  
The love of Jesus, what it is  
None but His loved ones know.

5 Jesus, our only Joy be Thou,  
As Thou our Prize wilt be ;  
Jesus, be Thou our Glory now,  
And through eternity.

---

Like No. 15, this hymn is translated from the Latin, and the original of this, as of that, was written by a monk, and the name of the writer of each was the same,—Bernard. But the other Bernard was an obscure monk in the Abbey of Cluny, while the writer of this, Bernard of Clairvaux (born 1091, died 1153), was head of the Abbey of that name, an orator, scholar, and statesman, and indeed one of the most prominent figures in the history of the middle ages. He had beautiful thoughts in his heart, and expressed some of them in lovely hymns. These five verses are from a translation of his hymn upon the Name of Jesus, made by the Rev. Edward Caswall in 1849. Caswall was then a clergyman in the Church of England, but in the next year joined the Roman Catholic Church.

29 A Hymn for the Children of God  
in the Days of their Pilgrimage.

CHILDREN of the heavenly King,  
As ye journey, sweetly sing ;  
Sing your Saviour's worthy praise,  
Glorious in His works and ways.

- 2 We are travelling home to God  
In the way the fathers trod ;  
They are happy now, and we  
Soon their happiness shall see.
- 3 Shout, ye little flock and blest ;  
Ye on Jesus' throne shall rest ;  
There your seat is now prepared,  
There your kingdom and reward.
- 4 Lift your eyes, ye sons of light,  
Zion's city is in sight ;  
There our endless home shall be,  
There our Lord we soon shall see.
- 5 Fear not, brethren ; joyful stand  
On the borders of your land ;  
Jesus Christ, your Father's Son,  
Bids you undismayed go on.

- 6 Lord, obediently we go,  
Gladly leaving all below ;  
Only Thou our Leader be,  
And we still will follow Thee.
- 

The author of this hymn was the Rev. John Cennick, born 1718. He was at one time a helper of the Wesleys in the Methodist meetings (see under No. 3), and afterward a clergyman in the Moravian Church. He published this in 1742 with many other hymns, and died at the early age of thirty-eight years. It is pleasant to think of him as safely home, while we travelers sing his cheerful hymn.

---

### 30 A Prospect of Heaven makes Death Easy.

THERE is a land of pure delight,  
Where saints immortal reign ;  
Infinite day excludes the night,  
And pleasures banish pain.

- 2 There everlasting spring abides,  
And never-withering flowers ;  
Death, like a narrow sea, divides  
This heavenly land from ours.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

- 3 Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood  
Stand dressed in living green ;  
So to the Jews old Canaan stood,  
While Jordan rolled between.
- 4 But timorous mortals start and shrink  
To cross this narrow sea ;  
And linger, shivering, on the brink,  
And fear to launch away.
- 5 O could we make our doubts remove,  
Those gloomy doubts that rise,  
And see the Canaan that we love  
With unbeckoned eyes ;
- 6 Could we but climb where Moses stood,  
And view the landscape o'er,  
Not Jordan's stream, nor death's cold  
flood,  
Should fright us from the shore.
- 

Another hymn by Dr. Watts (see under No. 2) ; one of the first he wrote, but published with the others in 1707. This hymn carries forward the thought of No. 25. God has led now the children of Israel all the way to the river Jordan, which alone separates them from the promised land ; and they should not be afraid that He will not take them safely across, nor fear to step into the

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

waters. And the crossing of Jordan has been ever since an image of the Christian's death, and Canaan an image of heaven. We need not be afraid of death, while we look toward heaven.

[NOTES.—Verse 3, line 4. *Jordan rolled between.* See Joshua iii, 1.

Verse 6, line 1. *Where Moses stood.* See Deuteronomy xxxiv, 1-4.

Verse 6, line 3. This line is not very clearly expressed. The meaning is, "Not Jordan's stream (that is to say, not death's cold flood.)"]

### 31 Missionary Hymn.

THOU, whose almighty word  
Chaos and darkness heard,  
And took their flight,  
Hear us, we humbly pray ;  
And, where the gospel's day  
Sheds not its glorious ray,  
Let there be light.

- 2 Thou, who didst come to bring  
On Thy redeeming wing  
Healing and sight,  
Health to the sick in mind,  
Sight to the inly blind,  
O now to all mankind  
Let there be light.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

- 3 Spirit of truth and love,  
Life-giving, holy Dove,  
Speed forth Thy flight ;  
Move o'er the waters' face  
Bearing the lamp of grace,  
And in earth's darkest place  
Let there be light.
- 4 Holy and blessèd Three,  
Glorious Trinity,  
Wisdom, Love, Might !  
Boundless as ocean's tide  
Rolling in fullest pride  
Through the world, far and wide,  
Let there be light.
- 

This hymn was written about 1813 by the Rev. John Marriott, pastor of a country church in England. In Genesis i, ii, and iii, we are told how the Spirit of God moved over the waters, before the earth had taken shape, and how God's voice called through the dark, "Let there be light." And now the poet prays that God will send His Holy Spirit with the light of Christ's gospel to all places in the world that are dark with sin and shame.

[NOTE.—Verse 4, line 1. Marriott wrote this line, "Blessed, and holy, and."] ]

### 32 Brief Life is Here our Portion.

BRIEF life is here our portion,  
Brief sorrow, short-lived care ;  
The life that knows no ending,  
The tearless life, is there.

- 2 O happy retribution !  
Short toil, eternal rest ;  
For mortals and for sinners  
A mansion with the blest !
- 3 And now we fight the battle,  
But then shall wear the crown  
Of full and everlasting  
And passionless renown ;
- 4 And now we watch and struggle,  
And now we live in hope,  
And Zion in her anguish  
With Babylon must cope ;
- 5 But He, whom now we trust in,  
Shall then be seen and known ;  
And they that know and see Him  
Shall have Him for their own.

## The Best Church Hymns.

---

- 6 The morning shall awaken,  
And shadows shall decay,  
And each true-hearted servant  
Shall shine as doth the day.
- 7 Yes, God, my King and Portion,  
In fulness of His grace,  
We then shall see for ever,  
And worship face to face.
- 

This, the last, but certainly not the least beautiful, of our thirty two hymns, was not written as a separate and complete hymn. It consists of verses taken from Dr. Neale's translation of the poem of Bernard, from which "Jerusalem the Golden" also was taken, and which is described under that hymn, No. 15.

[NOTES.—Verse 2, line 1. *Retribution*. The word is rightly used, as here to refer to the distribution of rewards in the next life, as well as of punishments.

Verse 4, lines 3 and 4. *Zion* is the Church of God in the world, and *Babylon* stands for the powers of worldliness that contend against the Church.

Verse 6, line 1. This line is slightly altered.]





F.P.  
1.1.1.2

