

Beloved Christian Hymns & Doxology

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Beloved Christian Hymns

Many beloved Christian hymns have endured from the centuries of Christian music, including those by Bernard of Clairvaux, J. S. Bach, George Frederick Handel, Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, Fanny Crosby, and many others. Many of the older hymn-writers were well-versed in Christian theology, and their enduring compositions display a marked depth of Christian thought and reflection.

Here, we will explore the theological themes of a selection of these hymns, what biblical and spiritual insights the writers were trying to convey, and (where they can be known) the historical circumstances of their compositions.

All the Way My Savior Leads Me

Text: Fanny Crosby (1820-1915)

Music: Robert Lowry (1826-1899)

*All the way my Savior leads me--What have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt His tender mercy, Who thru life has been my Guide?
Heav'nly peace, divinest comfort, Here by faith in Him to dwell!
For I know, whate'er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well.*

*All the way my Savior leads me--Cheers each winding path I tread,
Gives me grace for ev'ry trial, Feeds me with the living bread.
Tho my weary steps my falter And my soul athirst may be,
Gushing from the Rock before me, Lo! a spring of joy I see.*

*All the way my Savior leads me--O the fullness of His love!
Perfect rest to me is promised In my Father's house above.
When my spirit, clothed immortal, Wings its flight to realms of day,
This my song thru endless ages: Jesus led me all the way.*

Fanny Crosby, blind from age six by improper medical treatment, once desperately needed \$5.00. Not knowing where she could obtain it, she began to pray for God's help. In a few minutes, a stranger appeared at her door with the money. Overwhelmed by what seemed to be an immediate answer to her prayer, she wrote the lyrics to this hymn, after which Dr. Lowry set it to music.

Throughout her life, Fanny Crosby was a faithful member of St. John's Methodist Episcopal Church in New York. She married a blind musician from the New York School for the Blind, where she also served as a teacher. Though her early musical pieces were secular, in her early forties she began writing gospel hymns. Here, she found her true self, and her compositions have been deeply loved ever

since.¹

The theological theme of this hymn is the shepherd-leadership of the Lord to his people. It begins in the Old Testament with such familiar passages as Psalm 23:2, where the Lord leads his people "beside quiet waters," and Isaiah 40:11, where he "tends his flock like a shepherd," gathering the lambs in his arms, carrying them close to his heart, and gently leading those that have young. The repeating initial phrase in each stanza comes from the words of Moses, who urged the second generation Israelites in the desert to "remember how the LORD your God led you all the way" (Dt. 8:2). In the New Testament, this theme has its highest fulfillment in Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who calls his sheep by name and leads them out. The sheep know the voice of the shepherd, and they will never follow a stranger or a strange voice (John 10:2-5).

A primary feature of the shepherding metaphor is the absolute trust which the sheep has for its shepherd. Mercy, peace, comfort and faith are all part of this relationship expressed in the first stanza. Even if the shepherd leads the sheep through deep ravines--the famous "valley of the shadow of death" (Ps. 23:4)--still the sheep confesses freely: "I know whate'er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well!" This latter phrase comes from the story of Jesus' healing of the deaf and dumb man, when the crowd, overwhelmed by Jesus' gracious power, exclaimed, "He hath done all things well" (Mk. 7:37, KJV).

The second stanza draws its metaphors from the difficulties of life. The winding path is a familiar metaphor in the Psalms for following the way of the Lord (Ps. 16:11; 23:3; 25:10; 27:11; 119:105; 142:3), and it is hard not to think of the "Serpent's Path" which winds its way up the steep escarpment to the top of Masada, the ancient desert stronghold where David hid when on the run from Saul (1 Sa. 22:4-5; 24:22). The gift of grace in times of trial recalls God's declaration to Paul in the face of his hardship, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Co. 12:9). The living bread recalls both the bread from heaven given to the children of Israel as they sojourned in the wilderness (Ex. 16:4, 14-18), and also Jesus claim that he was himself the living bread (Jn. 6:35, 48, 51, 57-58). Finally, the second stanza closes with yet another exaltation of God's power to sustain by an allusion to the miraculous water from the rock which slaked the thirst of the Israelites in the desert (Ex. 17:1-6; Nu. 20:2-11; Ps. 105:40-41).

The final stanza moves from the present life to our future hope. If the Savior leads us in this life, he will surely lead us until we attain eternal life in heaven with him--he will "lead us all the way!" The promise of the Lord is perfect rest in the Father's house (Jn. 14:1-4). The path to that place is Jesus himself, who is "the Way" (Jn. 14:6). In death, the spirits of those who sleep in Jesus will be joined to the Lord

¹K. Osbeck, *101 Hymn Stories* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1982) 26.

forever, and in resurrection, they will be clothed with immortality (2 Co. 5:1-9; 1 Co. 15:53; 1 Th. 4:13-18). The endless song of the redeemed will be, "Jesus led me all the way!" (1 Pe. 5:4).

Abide with Me

Text: Henry F. Lyte (1793-1847)

Music: William H. Monk (1823-1889)

*Abide with me--fast falls the eventide,
The darkness deepens--Lord, with me abide;
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me!*

*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.*

*I need Thy presence ev'ry passing hour--
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's pow'r?
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?
Thru cloud and sunshine, O abide with me!*

*Hold Thou Thy word before my closing eyes,
Shine thru the gloom and point me to the skies;
Heav'n's morning breaks and earth's vain shadows flee--
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!*

Henry Lyte, pastor of a poor Anglican parish among fishing people at Lower Brixham, Devonshire, England, is perhaps best known for coining the phrase, "It is better to wear out than to rust out." Beset with asthma, and eventually tuberculosis, he preached his final sermon on September 4, 1847. Even then, he knew that he was dying, and he wrote this hymn shortly before his last Sunday.² In our modern era when death is hardly mentioned, even by Christians, this hymn is a clear testimony to the vibrant faith of the person who, because of Christ, can look with confidence beyond the grave.

The hymn begins with--and each stanza ends with--the prayer, "Abide with me!" While this phrase does not appear in the Bible in precisely the way it is used by Lyte, it well reflects the familiar sentiment of Psalm 91:1, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (KJV), or perhaps, the promise of the Lord, "I will pray the Father, and he will give you

²Osbeck, 16-17.

another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever" (Jn. 14:16, KJV). It is clear that the metaphors of eventide, deepening darkness, and the failure of human and earthly resources all point to the prospect of imminent death which Lyte himself faced. In view of human helplessness before death, the believer looks only to God who is the "help of the helpless" (Ps. 22:11; 33:20; 37:40; 40:17; 46:1).

The second stanza continues the metaphors of death with the ebbing of "life's little day," an allusion to the biblical theme of the brevity of life (Ja. 4:14). Earthly joys and glories dim and pass away, for as the prophet said, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall..." (Is. 40:6-7a). Every earthly thing is in the process of decay, and the very creation itself is now in "bondage to decay" (Ro. 8:21). Qoheleth, the ancient teacher, discovered that laughter, projects, luxury, wealth, music and recognition all pale in the face of death, and in the end, are meaningless--a chasing after the wind (Ecc. 2:1-11). The very foundations of the earth and the heavens will become old, and constantly they are in the process of change. Only the unchangeable God remains the same (Ps. 102:25-27; He. 1:10-12). Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever (He. 13:8)! To him alone can the prayer be directed, "Abide with me!"

The third stanza withdraws momentarily from the vision of imminent death to address the human need for God's abiding presence throughout the whole of life. "Every passing hour" of life is crucial, for only by God's grace can Satan be foiled (1 Co. 10:13). Whether in bad times or good, cloud or sunshine, the prayer remains, "Abide with me!"

At the final moment, the sure promises of the Bible are to be eagerly grasped as they are held before eyes which are closing with death. Only by the promises of God's word is there a clear vision "thru the gloom" pointing "to the skies." One of the recurring metaphors for the realm of the dead in the Old Testament is the Hebrew compound word "shadow of death" (Job 3:5; 10:21-22; 24:17; Ps. 23:4; Is. 9:2). For the Christian, however, death is the transition from "earth's vain shadows" (Ecc. 1:2) to heaven's morning, where the Lamb is the light (Rv. 22:5). So, whether in life or death, the prayer remains the same, "Abide with me!" In the end, the promise is firm: *The dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away (Rv. 21:3b-4).*

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

Text: Isaac Watts (1674-1748)
 Music: Based on a Gregorian Chant
 arranged by Lowell Mason (1792-1872)

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.

*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.*

*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?*

*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.*

Isaac Watts, one of the most prolific hymn writers of the 17th and 18th centuries, is frequently referred to as the father of English hymnody. He wrote many enduring hymns, such as, *O God, Our Help in Ages Past*, *I Sing the Mighty Power of God*, *Joy to the World*, *At the Cross*, and *We're Marching to Zion*. Watts' father, a congregationalist dissenter from the Church of England, was in prison for his non-conformist beliefs when Isaac was born. His son was a brilliant child, learning Latin at age five, Greek at nine, French at eleven and Hebrew at thirteen. For a period of two years, he wrote a new hymn every Sunday. Because his hymns departed from conventional styles, they were controversial, and Watts himself was considered to be a radical churchman.³

The present hymn was composed in 1707 for the communion service and originally titled, *Crucifixion to the World by the Cross of Christ*, a clear reference to Galatians 6:14. The theme resounds throughout that Christians are called upon to forsake worldly values by embracing the cross as the center of life and faith. If the Prince of glory emptied himself of his exalted position at God's right hand in order to die on a criminal's gibbet (Phil. 2:6-8), all earthly values pale by comparison. Human pride becomes utterly contemptible in view of the cross.

The second stanza continues this same thought by appealing to Paul's several references that, in view of the cross, all human boasting is futile (Ro. 4:2; 2 Co. 10:17-18; Ep. 2:8-9). The cross of Jesus declares that in one thing alone may humans boast--the gracious gift of God's forgiveness and grace displayed in the death of his Son on their behalf (1 Co. 1:29; Ga. 6:14). The immensity of this act is that the Christ who died was truly God! Twice Paul quotes the statement from Jeremiah 9:24, "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord" (1 Co. 1:31; 2 Co. 10:17). In the face of such a sacrifice, humans can only sacrifice the vanities of worldly life.

The third stanza reflects upon the paradoxical emotions of Jesus when he was crucified. In a powerful metaphor, Watts depicts the flowing blood of the Savior as being the peculiar mingling of love and sorrow. In Gethsemene, Jesus began his ordeal of inner distress with the announcement to his disciples, "My soul is

³Osbeck, 278-279,

overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death" (Mk. 14:33-34; Mt. 26:38). John's Gospel says, "Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love" (Jn. 13:1b). The crown of thorns symbolized both the terrible sorrow of his agony and the crowning achievement of his love.

Finally, the fourth stanza concentrates on the immensity of God's gift when he gave up his Son to the hour of death. Nothing in all the world could compare in value to such a gift. The whole of nature, could it be offered, would be woefully insufficient. Such amazing love not only requests, but demands, the entire soul and life of the Christian.

There is a Fountain

Text: William Cowper (1731-1800)
 Music: Traditional American Melody
 arranged by Lowell Mason (1792-1872)

*There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins,
 And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.*

*The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day,
 And there may I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away.*

*Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood, shall never lose its pow'r,
 Till all the ransomed Church of God be saved to sin no more.*

*E'er since by faith I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply,
 Redeeming love has been my theme and shall be till I die.*

*When this poor lisp'ing, stamm'ring tongue lies silent in the grave,
 Then in a nobler, sweeter song, I'll sing Thy pow'r to save.*

William Cowper wrote verse both sacred and secular, and he stands highly respected in English literature as an honored poet between Alexander Pope (1688-1744) and Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822). At an early age, he studied law, but he was so distressed by his bar examination he suffered a nervous breakdown, attempted suicide, and was committed to an insane asylum for a year and a half. While there, one day he read in Romans 3:25 about Christ's atoning sacrifice. He accepted God's forgiveness and began a personal relationship with the Lord. After his recovery and release, he eventually moved to where the converted slave trader, John Newton (author of "Amazing Grace"), pastored the Anglican parish church in Olney, England. Together they produced a hymnal, one of the single most important contributions to evangelical hymnody. Cowper battled depression off and on most of his life, but when he died, those around him said his face lit up as he uttered his final words, "I am

not shut out of heaven after all!"⁴

The hymn *There is a Fountain* is taken from the Old Testament promise, "On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity" (Zc. 13:1). This promise, which occurs in the midst of several fulfillment passages about one who would be pierced (Zc. 12:10b; Jn. 19:33-37; Rv. 1:7) and the shepherd who would be struck down (Zc. 13:7b; Mk. 14:27//Mt. 26:31), is surely messianic. Cowper saw clearly the connection between a fountain for cleansing from sin and the New Testament's repeated theme that it is the blood of Jesus which washes away sin (Ro. 3:25; 5:9; Ep. 1:7; He. 9:12-14; 1 Jn. 1:7). Like the previous hymn, the music for this one was arranged by Lowell Mason, sometimes called the father of American school and church music.

The first stanza makes the clear connection between the fountain predicted by Zechariah and the blood "drawn from Immanuel's veins," the Immanuel prediction being yet another Old Testament messianic prophecy (Is. 7:14; Mt. 1:22-23). In the "flood" of Jesus' blood, all stains of sinful guilt are removed.

The second stanza offers a biblical example of such saving faith at the hour of Christ's death. For Cowper, the first person to clearly see the fountain of atoning blood was the dying thief who, turning to the figure on the middle cross, asked, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Lk. 42-43). Christ's promise of salvation, "Today you will be with me in paradise," is the same promise he holds out to all who put their faith in the work of the cross. For any sinner, even one so vile as the criminal executed with Jesus, there is vibrant hope in the cross.

The third stanza picks up yet another theme from the New Testament, that in his death Jesus was acting out the part of the passover Lamb (Ac. 8:32-33; 1 Co. 5:7b; 1 Pe. 1:18-19; Rv. 5:6, 9, 12-13). Just as the Lamb slain is praised in heaven because he is worthy to receive power "forever and ever," so Cowper says the precious blood of the Lamb will never lose its power until the whole church of Jesus Christ, bought back from sin with the price of Jesus' blood (Ho. 13:14; Mt. 20:28//Mk. 10:45; 1 Ti. 2:6; He. 9:15), will be awarded final salvation for eternity (Ro. 5:9-10). Cowper effectively ties together the past and future tenses of salvation used by Paul: we have been saved, and we shall be saved.

The fourth stanza emphasizes faith and love, faith as the effective response to the shed blood of Jesus, and love as the triumphant theme of the redeemed. Finally, the hymn closes with the believer's victory over death. When the body is still and the tongue silent, the gift of eternal life is not diminished. Though any human effort to describe God's mighty power to save inevitably falls short, in heaven beyond death every believer will join in singing the eternal song of the redeemed to exult in God's

⁴Osbeck, 264-265.

salvation. A recurring image in the Book of Revelation is the singing of the redeemed in heaven (Re. 5:9; 14:3; 15:2-4). To sing such a song in the presence of heaven's Lamb could be nothing short of a "nobler, sweeter song."

O Sacred Head, Now Wounded

Text: Latin poem, ascribed to Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153)

German Text, Paul Gerhardt, trans. James W. Alexander

Music: Hans Leo Hassler; harmonized by J. S. Bach (1685-1750)

*O sacred Head, now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down,
Now scornfully surrounded with thorns Thine only crown:
How pale Thou art with anguish, with sore abuse and scorn,
How does that visage languish, which once was bright as morn!*

*What Thou, my Lord, has suffered, was all for sinners' gain;
Mine, mine was the transgression, but Thine the deadly pain.
Lo, here I fall, my Savior; 'tis I deserve Thy place;
Look on me with Thy favor, assist me with Thy grace.*

*What language can I borrow to thank Thee, dearest Friend,
For this, Thy dying sorrow, Thy pity without end?
O make me Thine forever, and should I fainting be,
Lord, let me never, never outlive my love to Thee.*

This hymn bears two distinguished names from the history of the Christian church, Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) and J. S. Bach (1685-1750). The first of these is widely recognized as the most influential Christian of the mid-Medieval era which bridged the gap between a feudal world and the rise of towns and universities. Wishing to turn his back on the world and its comforts, Bernard led a monastic life of prayer and self-denial while focusing on God's love. His work, *Why and How God is to be Loved*, is still widely read.⁵ Bach, who lived six centuries later, is considered to be the greatest composer of all time for the organ. Most of his music was written for the Lutheran Church, and most of his works are explicitly biblical. For three years, he not only composed a cantata each week, but rehearsed each of them weekly with the performers. In his own hand, the Latin abbreviations J.J. at the beginning and S.D.G. at the end of his compositions pointed to his driving aspiration *Jesu Juva* (= Jesus Help Me!) and *Soli Deo Gloria* (= To the Glory of God Alone!).⁶

The meaning of the hymn, *O Sacred Head*, is quite straightforward with little interpretive difficulty. It is a solemn reflection upon the crucifixion of Jesus. The

⁵C. Marshall, "Bernard of Clairvaux," *Eerdman's Handbook to the History of Christianity*, ed. T. Dowley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 260-261.

⁶K. Curtis, ed., "Bach to the Future," *Glimpses Number 3* (Worcester, PA: Christian History Institute, 1989).

first stanza begins with a visual contemplation of the abuse and suffering of the cross (Jn. 19:2; He. 12:2). It implicitly poses the question, "Why should anyone wish to do this?"

If the first stanza suggests such a question, the second stanza provides the theological answer. The reason Christ suffered was in behalf of sinners (1 Jn. 2:2), and the paradox in his death was that his loss was their gain (2 Co. 8:9). After the manner of St. Paul, the death of Jesus is deeply personalized by the repeating possessive pronoun, "Mine, mine..." (1 Ti. 1:15-16). Once more, the paradoxical exchange is emphasized in the contrast between what was "mine" and what was "Thine." The innocent Savior was condemned; the guilty sinner was given freedom. Every Christian can and must admit this truth in the face of Jesus' death, "'Tis I (who) deserve(s) Thy place (on the cross)!"

The third stanza moves beyond the recognition of Jesus' sacrifice for sin to the response of thankfulness and the profundity of life-long commitment. If Jesus did what he did, then the recipients of such transcendent grace owe the Lord the deepest expressions of love and loyalty.

What Wondrous Love is This

Text: American Folk Hymn

Music: William Walker's *Southern Harmony*, 1835

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul!
What wondrous love is this, O my soul!
What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul.
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul.

When I was sinking down, sinking down, sinking down,
When I was sinking down, sinking down.
When I was sinking down beneath God's righteous frown,
Christ laid aside His crown for my soul, for my soul,
Christ laid aside His crown for my soul.

To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing,
To God and to the Lamb I will sing,
To God and to the Lamb Who is the great "I Am,"
While millions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing,
While millions join the theme, I will sing.

And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on,
And when from death I'm free I'll sing on,
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing and joyful be,

*And thro' eternity I'll sing on, I'll sing on,
And thro' eternity I'll sing on.*

The theme for this hymn comes from the Old Testament assertion that a corpse hung up for exposure is under God's curse (Dt. 21:23). When a felon commits a capital crime, and after execution, the dead corpse is displayed as a warning to the public, the exposed corpse becomes a symbol of God's repudiation for covenant-breaking (Dt. 27:26). In the New Testament, Paul explains that Christ accepted God's curse in behalf of us all (Ga. 3:13). Because we were all covenant-breakers and deserved death (Ro. 1:32; 5:12; 6:21, 23), Christ accepted the punishment due us in his suffering and death (1 Pe. 3:18). It was Jesus' willing sacrifice of himself on the cross that turns away from us God's wrath against sin (Ro. 3:25; 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10).⁷ There is a divine abhorrence of sin, and the death of Jesus satisfies both God's abhorrence against sin as well as his sacrificial love toward sinners (Is. 53:10a, 12b).

It is in view of this strange joining of judgment and mercy in the death of Jesus that the hymn begins with the wondering exclamation about the "wondrous love" which God demonstrated in the death of his Son (Ro. 5:8-9). God's rightful anger against sin, which is revealed against all godlessness and wickedness (Ro. 1:18), renders every sinner hopelessly condemned apart from the saving work of Christ. Since every person is a sinner, every human is rightfully condemned and truly "sinking down, sinking down," as it says in the second verse (Ro. 3:23; 5:12). No one in heaven or earth is worthy to open the title deed of human redemption (Re. 5:1-4), other than the Lamb who was slain, and who by his blood purchased for God men and women from every people on earth (Re. 5:5-10). So, the third verse offers praise to God's Lamb. The one saved by Christ joins with the hosts of heaven and the redeemed of the earth to praise him. Finally, in the blessed freedom of eternal life beyond death, the song of the redeemed rings out forever in the presence of God and the Lamb!

Immortal, Invisible

TEXT: Walter Chalmers Smith (1824-1908)

MUSIC: Traditional Welsh Hymn Melody from John Roberts' *Canaidau y Cyssegr*, 1839

*Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious--Thy great name we praise.*

⁷Note the NIV alternative translations in the footnotes of these passages, i.e., "as the one who would turn aside his wrath, taking away sin," etc. While there has been considerable discussion about the theological meaning of the *hilaskomai* (= propitiation) word group in the New Testament, it is hard to escape that it refers to the turning away of God's wrath against sin, cf. L. Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 144-213.

*Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;
Thy justice, like mountains, high soaring above
Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.*

*To all, life Thou givest--to both great and small,
In all life Thou livest--the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
And wither and perish--but naught changeth Thee.*

*Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;
All praise we would render--O help us to see
'Tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee!*

This hymn is a doxology--a word of glory--is taken from a collage of doxologies beginning with 1 Timothy 1:17. It is an acclamation of God's attributes as God. He is imperishable (*immortal*, 1 Ti. 1:17; Ro. 1:23) and will never die (cf. Ps. 102:25-27//He. 1:10-12). He is unseen (*invisible*, 1 Ti. 1:17; cf. Col. 1:15; He. 11:27), because he is pure Spirit (Jn. 4:24). He is the only true God (Ro. 16:27; cf. 1 Co. 8:6; Jude 25) and the consummation of wisdom (Ro. 11:33-34). He is light (1 Jn. 1:5) so pure and intense that mortal humans cannot survive immediate exposure (1 Ti. 6:16; Ex. 33:20; Jn. 1:18). Divine titles like the "Ancient of Days" (Da. 7:9, 13, 22) and "Almighty" (*Tsabaoth*, Ge. 17:1; cf. Rv. 1:8, etc.) are acclamations of his divine nature.

The second stanza continues this description of God's attributes, emphasizing that he never sleeps (Ps. 121:3-4),⁸ he never hurries (2 Pe. 3:8-9), and he never lacks resources or squanders them (Ps. 50:9-12). His moral attributes are justice (Ro. 3:26; 2 Th. 1:6; 1 Jn. 1:9; Rv. 15:3), goodness (Ex. 33:19; 2 Chr. 6:41) and love (1 Jn. 4:7-14). The third stanza focuses upon God as life-source for all things (Jn. 1:4). Human life is the gift of God, who both gives life and withdraws it (Is. 40:6-8; 1 Pe. 1:24-25), though he himself is not diminished.]

Finally, the hymn exalts God as the Father of glory, and in the words of the Letter of James, the "Father of light" (Ja. 1:17). He is adored by angels (Rv. 4:8), who cover their faces before his divine majesty and splendor (Is. 6:2-3). Such a God deserves the full measure of human adoration and praise, even though his transcendence magnifies their creatureliness.

A Mighty Fortress is Our God

TEXT: Martin Luther (1483-1546), trans. Frederick Hedge (1805-1890)

MUSIC: Martin Luther

⁸The idea that God is "unresting" means that he is always aware, not that he does not take rest (cf. Ge. 2:2-3).

*A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
 Our helper He amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.
 For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe--
 His craft and pow'r are great, and armed with cruel hate,
 On earth is not his equal.*

*Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing,
 Were not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing.
 Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He--
 Lord Sabaoth His name, from age to age the same,
 And He must win the battle.*

*And tho this world with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,
 We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph thru us.
 The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him--
 His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure:
 One little word shall fell him.*

*That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth;
 The Spirit and the gifts are ours thru Him who with us sideth.
 Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also--
 the body they may kill; God's truth abideth still:
 His kingdom is forever.*

Martin Luther, the German monk who more than any other person symbolizes the Protestant Reformation, lived amidst great controversy and opposition from the Medieval Church which he defied. He denied the supremacy of the pope, the infallibility of the general councils, and he burned the papal bull which threatened his excommunication. At the Diet of Worms, he refused to recant unless his ideas were refuted with the Bible. To prevent harm from his enemies, Luther was secreted away in the Wartburg Castle under the protection of Frederick of Saxony, where he labored at translating the New Testament into German. He set about reforming public worship by freeing the Catholic mass from rigid forms, emphasizing instead the preaching of the Word, the communion and congregational singing. His famous hymn, *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*, could well be called the battle-hymn of the Reformation, for it depicts the Christian's utter dependence upon God in the midst of a world full of conflict, especially the believer's conflict with Satan and the powers of evil. The first line of the hymn is inscribed on Luther's tomb.

The hymn is based on Psalm 46, which describes God as "our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble." God is the defender and fortress of the righteous, and they will not fear or fail, because he is with them! Twice, Psalm 46 contains the refrain, "God...is our fortress," and it is this refrain that Luther uses as the

first line of the hymn. Satan, the ancient prince of hell, is formidable and overwhelming to mere humans (1 Pe. 5:8). If they tried to withstand him in their own strength, they would surely fail, just as some would-be exorcists in the early church discovered (Ac. 19:13-16). But God has chosen his Champion, Christ Jesus, who shall reign until all enemies have been subdued under his feet (Ps. 110:1; 1 Co. 15:24-26). He is the Lord of Hosts, *Yahweh Tsabaoth*,⁹ and he will win the final victory (Rv. 19:11-21). Though the whole universe is filled with the demons of darkness, still the truth of God will prevail. In the end, Satan will be vanquished by the Word of God, the divine, sharp, double-edged sword of the Son of God (Rv. 1:16; 2:12; 19:13, 15). Jesus Christ, the Word of God (Jn. 1:1-2, 14), stands exalted above all the powers in the universe (Col. 1:15-20). In the cross and the resurrection, he defeated the purposes of Satan (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:8-11). Those who were captive under the sentence of death he led captive to himself (Ep. 4:8; He. 2:14-15), and he distributed to them the gifts of the Holy Spirit to empower them (Ep. 4:8-13). Earthly life is temporary. Possessions, relatives, honor, family--even life itself--may be lost in the struggle against evil, but God's truth will stand forever, and his kingdom can never be shaken (2 Ti. 4:18; He. 12:28-29; Rv. 11:15; 12:10-11).

Luther championed church music. He said, "Music is hateful and intolerable to the devil. I really believe, nor am I ashamed to assert, that next to theology there is no art equal to music. It is the only art, next to theology, that can give a quiet and happy mind, which is manifest proof that the devil, the source of anxiety and sadness, flees from the sound of music as he does from religious worship. That is why the Scriptures are filled with psalms and hymns, in which praise is given to God. That is why, when we are gathered round God's throne in heaven, we shall sing his glory. Music is the perfect vehicle for expressing our love and devotion to God."¹⁰

Luther's hymn has been translated into some sixty languages, one translation which follows.¹¹ Americans tend to use the translation by Hedge (above), who was a professor at Harvard University, while the English tend to use the following translation by Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881).

*A safe stronghold our God is still, a trusty shield and weapon;
He'll help us clear from all the ill that has us now o'ertaken.
The ancient prince of hell hath risen with purpose fell;
Strong mail of craft and power he weareth in this hour,
On earth is not his fellow.*

With force of arms we nothing can, full soon were we down-ridden;

⁹*Yahweh Tsabaoth* is the Hebrew name "LORD of armies."

¹⁰F. Van de Weyer, ed., *Selected Readings from Martin Luther* (United Kingdom: Hunt & Thorpe, 1991) 58-59.

¹¹J. Atkinson, "Reform," *Eerdmans' Handbook*, 365.

*But for us fights the proper Man, whom God himself hath bidden.
Ask ye who is this same? Christ Jesus is his name,
The Lord Sabaoth's Son; He, and no other one,
Shall conquer in the battle.*

*And were this world all devils o'er, and watching to devour us,
We lay it not to heart so sore; not they can overpower us.
And let the prince of ill look grim as e'er he will,
He harms us not a whit; for why his doom is writ;
A word shall quickly slay him.*

*God's word, for all their craft and force, one moment shall not linger,
But, spite of hell, shall have its course; 'Tis written by his finger.
And, though they take our life, goods, honour, children, wife,
Yet is their profit small; these things shall vanish all:
The city of God remaineth.*

Rock of Ages

TEXT: Augustus M. Toplady (1740-1778)

MUSIC: Thomas Hastings (1784-1872)

*Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood, from thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure, save from wrath and make me pure.*

*Could my tears forever flow, could my zeal no languor know,
These for sin could not atone--Thou must save, and Thou alone:
In my hand no price I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling.*

*While I draw this fleeting breath, when my eyes shall close in death,
When I rise to worlds unknown and behold Thee on Thy throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee.*

Though "Rock of Ages" is one of the most famous hymns in the English language, it comes as something of a surprise to learn that this hymn, for all its gospel truth, was born in the midst of theological controversy. The author Toplady, son of a major in the English army, accepted Christ on a trip to Ireland, where he heard an illiterate layperson preach to a handful of people in a barn.¹² He went on to become an ardent Calvinist, which brought him into passionate conflict with the Arminian views of the Wesley brothers. In public debates, pamphlets and sermons Toplady and the Wesleys battled, not always with courtesy, over the tension between divine sovereignty and human freedom. The text of this hymn first appeared as the final

¹²n.a., *Gleanings from the Sacred Poets* (Edinburgh and London: Gall & Inglis, n.d.) 143.

argument in an article which asserted that, just as England could never repay her national debt, so the sinner could never satisfy the righteous demands of God. He must rely on God's mercy and grace alone apart from human contribution.

Ironically, the text of the hymn owes a good deal to something written many years earlier by Charles Wesley. In spite of Toplady's disagreements with the Wesleys, he borrowed (some would say plagiarized) the major ideas for this hymn from a Charles Wesley paragraph which read: *O Rock of Israel, Rock of Salvation, Rock struck for me, let those two streams of Blood and Water which once gushed out of Thy side, bring down Pardon and Holiness into my soul. And let me thirst after them now, as if I stood upon the Mountain when sprang this Water; and near the Cleft of that Rock, the Wounds of my Lord, whence gushed this Sacred Blood.*¹³ There also was a particular incident that contributed to the hymn. Toplady was traveling through the rough country of England's Cheddar Gorge, and in a cloudburst, he found shelter in a rocky overhang. His moment of protection from wind and rain prompted the spiritual parallel of the Rock of Ages within which a shelter can be found.¹⁴

The theme for the hymn, then, derives from two Old Testament stories from the life of Moses, the story of water from the rock (Ex. 17:1-6) and the story of Moses being hidden in a rocky fissure on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 33:19-23). On the one hand, the striking of the rock from which the water gushed is depicted as a foreshadowing of the cross, where Jesus, the spiritual Rock, was smitten and from whose side flowed blood and water (Jn. 19:34; cf. 1 Co. 10:4).¹⁵ On the other, Moses' experience, during which he was sheltered in a cleft of the rock while God's glory was proclaimed, puts emphasis on the sovereignty of God who declares, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Humans can contribute nothing to salvation, for it comes as a gift from God alone. Their tears and zeal, even if genuinely sincere, cannot atone for sin. No human offering could ever be sufficient.¹⁶

Finally, the hymn closes with the vision of death and final judgment. When every human stands before the judgment seat of Christ, final salvation rests in the Rock, Jesus Christ, whose death for sinners becomes the final shelter in which they hide.

The Solid Rock

TEXT: Edward Mote (1797-1874)

MUSIC: William B. Bradbury (1816-1868)

¹³Osbeck, 216-217.

¹⁴*Glimpses* (Issue #61).

¹⁵There is more than one version of the hymn, and in one the "double cure" is given as freedom from sin's "guilt" and "pow'r." The more popular version, given here, is that the double cure is salvation from God's "wrath" and the gift of "purification."

¹⁶In the different versions of the hymn, the longer version has two middle verses between the opening and closing verses, while the shorter version conflates the middle verses into a single verse.

*My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus' name.*

*When darkness veils His lovely face I rest on his unchanging grace;
In ev'ry high and stormy gale my anchor holds within the veil.*

*His oath, His covenant, His blood support me in the whelming flood;
When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay.*

*When He shall come with trumpet sound, O may I then in Him be found,
Dressed in his righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne.*

REFRAIN:

*On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand--all other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand.*

This hymn, even more than most, is rich in its references to the theology of the New Testament, and in particular, to the books of 1 Peter and Hebrews. It begins with the triumphant assertion that the believer's eternal hope is firmly grounded in the shed blood of Jesus' and his gift of righteousness (1 Pe. 1:3, 18-21). As fallible humans, we dare not trust in any system (frame), however compelling, but instead trust completely in Jesus and everything his name represents. This means, of course, that we cannot put our trust in the whimsy of human emotion. Sometimes it may seem that God is hidden, and like Paul, our prayers are not answered (2 Co. 12:8-9). It is then that the Christian must depend upon the absolute promise of God's sufficient grace. The phrases "unchanging grace" and the anchor which "holds within the veil" both come from the Book of Hebrews, where the unchangeableness of God's purpose to fulfill his promise of blessing to Abraham and his seed was confirmed with an oath (He. 6:13-17). In fact, God's promise and his oath are "two unchangeable things" that guarantee salvation to those who follow the faith of Abraham (He. 6:18). Because of these two unchangeable things, believers can take hold of the hope offered to them.

This hope is like an anchor tied to Jesus, the Great High Priest, who passed within the inner veil of heaven, just as the ancient priests passed through the inner veil of the earthly temple (He. 6:19-20a). The third stanza spells it out explicitly: God's oath to Abraham (Ge. 22:15-18), his covenant of blessing (Ge. 12:1-3), and the covenant sign of blood (Ge. 15:9-10, 18) all have their counterparts in the gospel story. The death of Jesus was the establishment of the new covenant in his blood (Mk. 14:24). The blessing of Abraham, which is the blessing of salvation, is given to all who have the faith of Abraham (Ro. 4:3-5, 9-12, 16-17, 22-25). No matter what storm or flood may rise, the believer whose anchor is tied to Jesus Christ will not fail (Rv. 12:15-16).

The final moment of triumph is the second coming of Jesus (1 th. 4:16-17). The author echoes Paul's exclamation, "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord...I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own...but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith" (Phil. 7-9). Thus, Edward Mote ties together "Jesus' righteousness" from the first stanza to the prayer that he may be "found in him, dressed in his righteousness alone" in the last stanza. Isaiah's triumphant lyric, "He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness" (Is. 61:10) is answered by Paul's exultant announcement, "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you...have been clothed with Christ" (Ga. 3:27; cf. Col. 3:10). In the end, then, Christ will "present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy" (Jude 24)!

So, as Peter says, we "come to him, the living Stone" (1 Pe. 2:4). Upon Christ, the solid Rock, the believer takes his stand, and "the one who trust in him will never be put to shame" (1 Pe. 2:6b). By following the life of faith in Jesus, believers are like the wise man who built his house on the rock (Mt. 7:24-27). All other ground is sinking sand!

Battle Hymn of the Republic

TEXT: Julia Ward Howe (1819-1910)

MUSIC: Traditional American Melody (c. 1852)

*Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord,
He has trampled out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He has loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword--
His truth is marching on.*

*I have seen Him in the watchfires of a hundred circling camps,
They have builded him an altar in the evening dews and damps;
I can read his righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps--
His day is marching on.*

*He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never sound retreat,
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat;
O be swift, my soul, to answer Him! Be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on.*

*In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me;
As he died to make men holy, let us live to make men free,
While God is marching on.*

Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
His truth is marching on!

Julia Ward Howe, writer, lecturer and social reformer, is justly famous for a number of things, not the least of which is the idea of "Mother's Day." She also served as first president for the New England Woman Suffrage Association. Her most well-known contribution, however, was the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, written after her visit to the army camps around Washington D.C. in 1861. After reviewing daily the marching of the troops and their singing of *John Brown's Body* to an old campmeeting tune, her pastor suggested that she compose "some decent words" for the music. Julia took up the challenge, and she left the following account:

I awoke in the grey of the morning, and as I lay waiting for dawn, the long lines of the desired poem began to entwine themselves in my mind, and I said to myself, "I must get up and write these verses, lest I fall asleep and forget them!" So I sprang out of bed and in the dimness found an old stump of a pen, which I remembered using the day before. I scrawled these verse almost without looking at the paper.

Her poem, for which she received the grand total of \$5.00, was titled and published by James Russell Lowell in the *Atlantic Monthly* in February 1862. It became the major war song of the Union forces in the Civil War.¹⁷

Philosophically, the text of the hymn owes a good deal to the then popular theology of post-millennialism, that is, the belief that

the church would successfully christianize the world before the return of Jesus Christ. Advances in science, medicine, technology and humanitarianism were viewed as significant steps toward establishing God's kingdom on the earth. Since the time of Jonathan Edwards of Puritan fame, postmillennial thinkers had emphasized the place of America as a leader in realizing this ideal. Many believed that the steam press, the locomotive and the steamship were all gifts of God to spread enlightenment and the Christian message to all peoples of the world. Whenever the United States faced a crisis, the ideals of postmillennialism were appealed to as a means of encouragement and comfort. Julia Ward Howe's hymn expresses this ideal by describing God at work in the Northern forces to accomplish his ultimate purpose. The visions of the final conflict between good and evil and the last judgment in the Book of Revelation

¹⁷Osbeck, 35-36.

were being spelled out in the American Civil War.¹⁸

In the first stanza, the coming of the Lord in judgment to strike the nations (cf. Rv. 19:15) was being lived out in the conflict between the Blue and the Gray. In the second stanza, the military camps, where devotions from the Bible were held in the evenings, demonstrated that God's millennial "day" was advancing. The third stanza interprets the final judgment of God as the "sifting" of American hearts as they hear the call to arms. The final stanza captures the ideal of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man with its call to human freedom, the truth of God that marches on.

In spite of its postmillennial tendencies, this hymn has remained a favorite of Christians of all kinds. Whether or not one agrees with Howe's American "Zionism", the imagery of God's direct involvement in human affairs and the triumph of ultimate truth are compelling themes.

El Shaddai

TEXT and MUSIC: Michael Card (1957--) and John Thompson (1950--)

*El Shaddai, El Shaddai, El Elyon na Adonai;
Age to age You're still the same by the power of the name.
El Shaddai, El Shaddai, Erkahmka na Adonai;
We will praise and lift You high, El Shaddai.*

*Through your love and through the ram You saved the Son of Abraham;
Through the power of Your hand, turned the sea into dry land.
To the outcast on her knees You were the God who really sees
And by Your might You set Your children free.*

*Through the years You made it clear that the time of Christ was near;
Though the people couldn't see what Messiah ought to be.
Though Your Word contained the plan, they just could not understand
Your most awesome work was done through the frailty of Your Son.*

c 1981 Mole End Music (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing) CCLI #242317

This hymn, the most contemporary of the ones we are studying, takes its starting point from the ancient name of God in the Book of Genesis. Speaking to Moses, God said, *I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as El Shaddai* (Ex. 6:3a; cf. Ge. 17:1; 28:3; 35:11), a name that is usually rendered in the English Versions as "Almighty God."¹⁹ In sequence, two other important names for God

¹⁸R. Clouse, *EDT* (1984) 717-718.

¹⁹*El*, of course, is the semitic singular form of the word "God." *Shaddai*, on the other hand, is ambiguous, and no satisfactory derivation has won consensus. The traditional idea, taken from rabbinical interpretations, is that it means self-sufficiency. Contextually, it seems to emphasize the might of God over against human frailty, cf. D. Kidner, *Genesis* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1967) 128-129; V. Hamilton, *TWOT* (1980) II.907.

appear in the first line of the song, *El Elyon* (= God Most High, cf. Ge. 14:18-19) and *Adonai* (= Lord, my Lordship). *El Elyon* is the name Melchizedek used for God when he served Abraham bread and wine (Ge. 14:18-20). *Adonai* is frequently used in the Old Testament in apposition to Yahweh. These ancient names describe God's sovereign character. He is the unchanging God, and his names declare him so. For the ancient Israelite, names were very important, for the worth and meaning of a person was concentrated in his/her name. The name carried the personal power of the one who bore it. When a believer entered into a relationship with God, he started by pronouncing his name.²⁰ Thus, the pronunciation of the ancient names in the first stanza followed by the Hebrew expression *Erkahnka na Adonai* (= We will love you, O Lord) yields an emotive tie to the ancient people of God and their worship.

The ancient stories of faith in which divine names are revealed become defining moments for the true character of God. The second stanza, while it does not specifically cite another divine name, presupposes three more names drawn from key Old Testament narratives. The first is *Yahweh-Yireh* (= the LORD will see or the LORD will provide, cf. Ge. 22:14).²¹ The story describes Abraham and Isaac on Moriah, where at the last possible moment, God intervened to spare the life of Isaac by providing a substitutionary ram for sacrifice (Ge. 22:9-14). The name presupposed in the second line is *Yahweh 'Ish Milhamah* (= Yahweh, Man of War, cf. Ex. 15:3). The setting, of course, is the Red Sea, where God allowed the children of Israel to pass through on dry ground to escape the armies of Pharaoh (Ex. 14). The third line takes us back to the name *El-Roi'* (= God who sees, cf. Ge. 16:13). When Hagar escaped into the desert from Sarai, her mistress, God appeared to her and announced that she would have a son named Ishmael. There she called God *El Roi'*, and she named the place *Beer Lahai Roi* (= well of the living One who sees me). Each of these three circumstances define God as one who gives freedom and offers protection, so the stanza ends: *By Your might You set Your children free!*

The final stanza bridges the centuries between these ancient stories and the appearance of Christ. The ancient names would find their highest meaning when they were lived out in the person of God's Son, Jesus the Messiah. Though the people in the time of Jesus were largely blinded to his real identity, God's plan, which had been hinted at in all these ancient narratives, did not fail. Jesus was God Almighty, the Lord, the One who provided a sacrifice on Calvary, the Man of War who defeated the power of evil, and the One who showed compassion on the outcast in travail. In the end, God's most awesome work was accomplished, not by sovereign domination, but by his acceptance of human weakness and death--through the "frailty" of his Son!

²⁰. Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. A. Heathcote and P. Allcock (New York: Harper & Row, 1958) 43.

²¹The verb is the common Hebrew "to see," but it is used idiomatically to indicate choice. Thus, to say that God would "see" a lamb meant that he would choose or provide a lamb.

All Creatures of Our God and King

TEXT: St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), translated by William Draper

MUSIC: *Geistliche Kirchengesänge*, Cologne (1623)

*All creatures of our God and King, lift up your voice and with us sing
Alleluia, Alleluia!*

*Though burning sun with golden beam, thou silver moon with softer gleam,
O praise Him, O praise Him, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!*

*Thou rushing wind that art so strong, ye clouds that sail in heaven along,
O praise Him, Alleluia!*

*Thou rising morn in praise rejoice, ye lights of evening, find a voice,
O praise Him, O praise Him, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!*

*Thou flowing water, pure and clear, make music for thy Lord to hear,
Alleluia, Alleluia!*

*Thou fire so masterful and bright, that givest man both warmth and light,
O praise Him, O praise Him, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!*

*And all ye men of tender heart, forgiving others take your part,
O sing ye, Alleluia!*

*Ye who long pain and sorrow bear, praise God and on Him cast your care,
O praise Him, O praise Him, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!*

*Let all things their Creator bless, and worship Him in humbleness,
O praise Him, Alleluia!*

*Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son, and praise the Spirit, Three in One,
O praise Him, O praise Him, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!*

Giovanni Bernardone, better known as St. Francis of Assisi, was the son of a wealthy Italian cloth merchant. After a carefree youth, he was converted to Christianity and in a vision he saw the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:7-10. Taking this as his call, he left home in a ragged coat with a rope-belt taken from a scarecrow and wandered the countryside, begging from the rich, giving to the poor, and preaching the gospel. With permission from the Pope, he founded an order of the Friars Minor which preached and cared for the sick and poor. In spite of being ill and blind, he wrote "Canticles of the Sun" the year before his death, and from this piece the lyrics of this hymn were taken.²² Besides this hymn, the most well-known of St. Francis' compositions is the verse which reads:

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.

²²R. Clouse, "Francis of Assisi," *Eerdmans Handbook to the History of Christianity*, T. Dowley, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 264-265.

*Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to
console;
Not so much to be understood as to understand;
Not so much to be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are
pardoned;
It is in dying that we awaken to eternal life.*

St. Francis did not turn to nature as a refuge from the world, but rather looked at the creation as something which pointed to the Creator. This hymn exalts God as Creator, and it expresses the same sentiments as the biblical poet who said, "The heavens declare God's glory; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" (Ps. 19:1-6). Paul quoted this very passage in asserting that the message of God has gone out to the ends of the world (cf. Ro. 10:18). Elihu, the friend of Job (Job 37), and God himself (Job 38) affirm the testimony of sky and weather to God's greatness. In the end, of course, the praise that counts the most is the praise of humans who offer it out of freedom. By their forgiveness toward each other (Mt. 18:35) and their patience during suffering (1 Pe. 5:7; Ja. 5:10-11) they praise God with profound eloquence. They worship him in humility (1 Pe. 5:5-6; Ja. 4:6), giving praise to the triune God (2 Co. 13:14).

This Is My Father's World

TEXT: Maltbie D. Babcock (1858-1901)

MUSIC: Franklin L. Shepard (1852-1930), from the tune *Terra Beata* (Latin for "Blessed Earth")

*This is my Father's world, and to my listening ears
All nature sings, and 'round me rings the music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world: I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas--His hand the wonders wrought.*

*This is my Father's world, the birds their carols raise,
The morning light, the lily white, declare their Maker's praise.
This is my Father's world: He shines in all that's fair;
In the rustling grass I hear Him pass, He speaks to me everywhere.*

*This is my Father's world, O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the Ruler yet.
This is my Father's world: the battle is not done;
Jesus who died shall be satisfied, and earth and heaven be one.*

The Reverend Maltbie Babcock, Presbyterian pastor in Lockport, New York,

was justly famous in his own day. A champion baseball pitcher and swimmer as well as a pianist, organist and violinist, he was tall and muscular, and his moral convictions matched his physical strength and musical accomplishments. He had the habit of taking walks to the top of a hill north of the town where he could look over Lake Ontario. His quip to inquirers was, "I'm going out to see my Father's world." This hymn, like the previous one, is an expression of his conviction that the created world is a testimony to God's majesty.

Isaiah speaks of the mountains, hills and trees giving praise to God (Is. 55:12). Jesus said that even the stones could cry out in praise to the Lord (Lk. 19:40). The biblical poet, speaking for God, says, "For every animal of the forest is mine...every bird...the creatures of the field...for the world is mine, and all that is in it" (Ps. 50:10-12). These and other such expressions are captured in Babcock's hymn.

In the last stanza, Babcock turns to the moral issue of ultimate justice. Like Henry Longfellow's Christmas carol, which admits, "Hate is strong and mocks the song of peace on earth good will to men,"²³ Babcock frankly confesses that "the wrong seems oft so strong." Nevertheless, the testimony of God's providence over the created world proclaims that he is still the Ruler of all! The decisive battle at the cross was won, but the war is not over yet! Jesus Christ must reign until all enemies are put under his feet (1 Co. 15:25-28). Then the prayer that the Lord taught his disciples to pray will be answered, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt. 7:10)! When the kingdom of heaven shall rule over all the earth, and the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord (Is. 11:9), then Jesus Christ, died and risen again, will be satisfied that his full work is finished.

²³From I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day.

Were You There?

TEXT and MUSIC: Traditional Spiritual

*Was you there when they crucified ma Lord?
Was you there when they crucified ma Lord?
O! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble!
Was you there when they crucified ma Lord?*

*Was you there when they nailed Him to de tree?
Was you there when they nailed Him to de tree?
O! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble!
Was you there when they nailed Him to de tree?*

*Was you there when they laid Him in de tomb?
Was you there when they laid Him in de tomb?
O! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble!
Was you there when they laid Him in de tomb?*

*Was you there when he rose up from de dead?
Was you there when he rose up from de dead?
O! Sometimes I feel like shouting glory, glory, glory!
Was you there when he rose up from de dead?*

The experience of African Americans has shaped an entire genre of Christian music called black spirituals. Blacks first appeared in America as indentured servants,²⁴ but between 1640 and 1660, the system of slavery began to harden. By the Civil War, some 1.4 million unwilling black immigrants had landed on the shores of North America, stripped of their personhood, and destined to a life of abject slavery. Their unjust suffering enabled them to identify with the unjust suffering of Jesus in a unique and powerful way. James Cone has well stated, "Because black slaves knew the significance of the pain and shame of Jesus' death on the cross, they found themselves by his side. Through the blood of slavery, black slaves transcended the limitations of space and time. Jesus' time became their time, and they encountered a new historical existence. Through the experience of being slaves, they encountered the theological significance of Jesus' death: through the crucifixion, Jesus makes an unqualified identification with the poor and the helpless and takes their pain upon himself."²⁵

²⁴Indenture was a contract binding one party into the service of another for a specified period of time. Hundreds of thousands of whites who lacked the means to get to the New World also became indentured servants by selling themselves into temporary bondage (usually three to seven years) to pay transportation costs. Many blacks did the same.

²⁵James Cone, *The Spiritual and the Blues: An Interpretation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992) 49.

The power of the spirituals, then, lies in the fact that they draw upon this pathos of real human feeling and experience. Furthermore, many stories from the Bible become existential themes in which the ancient biblical accounts are entwined with the African American experience and hope. This is especially to be seen in such spirituals as "Go down, Moses, "Joshua Fit de Battle ob Jerico," "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "Some Times I Feel Lak a Motherless Chile," "De Blood Come Twinklin' Down," "Never Said a Mumbalin' Word," and "All God's Chillen Got Wings."²⁶

The spiritual, "Was You There?", which has been sanitized to "Were You There?", is just such a spiritual. In it, the question compels the listener to identify with the sufferings of Jesus, and by implication, with the sufferings of the black unnamed author. Though the lyrics are simple in their depiction of the crucifixion, nailing and burial of Jesus, the pathos of the hymn is profound. Not to be overlooked is the triumphant fourth stanza with its majestic and jubilant, "I feel like shouting glory!" It speaks eloquently of the overcoming spirit in a people who had themselves felt the sting and humiliation of unjust suffering and, through the resurrection of our Lord, still could look to the future with a deep and resonant hope. The Christian African American story contains the shouts of victors as well as the outcry of victims. The New Testament account of Jesus' passion contains both themes as well!

Precious Lord, Take My Hand

TEXT: Thomas A. Dorsey (1900-1993)

MUSIC: George N. Allen; adapted by Thomas A. Dorsey

*Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, help me stand--
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;
Thro' the storm, thro' the night, lead me on to the light--
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.*

*When my way grows drear, precious Lord, linger near--
When my life is almost gone;
Hear my cry, hear my call, hold my hand lest I fall--
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.*

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Without question, one of the most endearing black gospel songs is "Precious Lord, Take My Hand." In this hymn, Thomas Dorsey took the music of a 19th century Anglican hymn, "Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone," and adapted it to a gospel blues tune. However, this song was far more than a striking example of an emerging musical genre. It was born in the midst of personal tragedy.

²⁶C. Brooks, et al., *American Literature: The Makers and the Making* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1974) 749-756.

At the end of August 1932, Thomas Dorsey lost Nettie, his wife, while she was giving birth to their first child. Early the next morning, the child died, too. These two deaths shook Dorsey profoundly. Though Nettie did not often travel with him, she was a subtle inspiration to all his work. He would sing his songs to her first. On this occasion, Dorsey had gone to St. Louis to a singing convention. Nettie's pregnancy seemed normal enough, and the last time he saw her was when he crept into their bedroom to pick up his briefcase full of music while she was sleeping. He never saw her alive again. During the St. Louis concert, he received the telegram, "Hurry home. Your wife is very sick. She is going to have the baby." As soon as he could, he telephoned, only to hear the message, "Nettie's dead! Nettie's dead! Hurry home!" When he arrived at their home in Chicago, he was so disturbed that the doctor gave him a sedative. When he awoke a few hours later, it was to discover a nurse showing him his newborn son, Thomas Andrew Dorsey, Jr. Later that night, the child died, too.

Dorsey's first reaction was that God was unfair, but in time, still deeply grief-stricken over the loss of his wife and son, his final response was the song, "Precious Lord, Take My Hand." In his own words, he said, *We never really miss anyone until they are gone for good. I missed Nettie on every turn of the way. When I came in after a hard day, there was no one to greet me at the door. When I sat to the table to eat, there was no smiling face across the table and I had to eat alone. When I retired for the night, there was no goodnight kiss. I became so lonely I did not feel that I could go on alone. I needed help; my friends and relations had done all they could for me. I was failing and did not see how I could live.* In utter despondency, Dorsey walked over to a nearby school to get away from home for awhile, and while there, he "plunked 'round on the piano." He had no intention of composing a song, but in his musical meandering he began playing the old hymn, "Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone." Somewhere in this process, he shifted from the original hymn's sense of penitence to his own need for God's help. In this moment, a wonderful hymn was born.

Thomas Dorsey published more than 400 gospel songs in his lifetime, among them, "There Will Be Peace in the Valley" and "If You See My Savior." He trained gospel singers like Mahalia Jackson. Today, he is revered as the "father" of gospel blues.²⁷

²⁷M. Harris, *The Rise of Gospel Blues* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) 209-240.

O For a Thousand Tongues

TEXT: Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

MUSIC: Carl G. Glazer (1784-1829)

*O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise,
The glories of my God and King, the triumphs of His grace.*

*Jesus! the name that charms our fears, that bids our sorrows cease,
'Tis music in the sinner's ears, 'tis life and health and peace.*

*He breaks the power of cancelled sin, He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean, His blood availed for me.*

*Hear Him, yet deaf; His praise, ye dumb, your loosened tongues employ;
Ye blind, behold your Savior come; and leap, ye lame, for joy.*

*My gracious Master and my God, assist me to proclaim,
To spread thro' all the earth abroad, the honors of Thy name.*

The brothers John and Charles Wesley were both reared in the church. After attending Oxford University, where because of their methodical habits of life and study they were dubbed "methodists," they sailed for Georgia on a mission for the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. While on this trip they encountered some Moravian missionaries (the spiritual descendants of Jan Hus), who deeply influenced them with their spiritual depth. Returning to England, they each, within three days of each other, experienced a deep spiritual renewal. John Wesley spoke of it as having his heart "strangely warmed" when at Aldersgate Street, London he was at a meeting where a passage from Luther's *Preface to Romans* was being read. The two brothers were some of the most influential leaders of the first Great Awakening, which also included George Whitefield of England and Jonathan Edwards of America. John was known for his preaching and Charles for his hymnody.²⁸

Charles Wesley authored some of the most enduring hymns of the Christian faith, including the carols *Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus* and *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* as well as hymns such as *And Can It Be?*, *Christ the Lord is Risen Today*, *Rejoice the Lord is King* and *Jesus Lover of My Soul* among others. In all he produced more than 7000 sacred songs and poems. The hymn *O For a Thousand Tongues* was composed in 1749 on the eleventh anniversary of his Aldersgate experience. It is believed to have been inspired by the chance statement of Peter Bohler, a Moravian minister, who said, "Had I a thousand tongues, I would praise

²⁸Dowley, 446-448.

Christ Jesus with all of them!" The original title, *For the Anniversary Day of One's Conversion*, is no longer used, nor are many of the original nineteen stanzas.²⁹

The hymn focuses on the profound elements of atonement and conversion. The theological words "Redeemer," "grace," "life," "peace," and "free" carry the gospel message. Who can help but thrill at the lyric that Christ "breaks the power of cancelled sin," for sin has been cancelled in the cross (Col. 2:13-14), but its power over individuals is broken when they commit themselves to life in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-18). The striking oxymorons, "Hear him, ye deaf; his praise, ye dumb" and "ye blind, behold your Savior come" are unforgettable as they recall the prophetic hope that "the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb shout for joy" (Is. 35:5-6a).

The Church's One Foundation

TEXT: Samuel Stone (1839-1900)

MUSIC: Samuel Wesley (1810-1876)

*The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is His new creation by water and the Word;
From heav'n He came and sought her to be His holy bride;
With His own blood he bought her, and for her life He died.*

*Elect from ev'ry nation, yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation one Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy name she blesses, partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses, with ev'ry grace endued.*

*'Mid toil and tribulation and tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation of peace forevermore;
'Til with the vision glorious her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious shall be the Church at rest.*

*Yet she on earth hath union with God the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won:
O happy ones and holy! Lord, give us grace that we,
Like them the meek and lowly, on high may dwell with Thee.*

This hymn was born in the disquieting struggle introduced by eighteenth century rationalism and the enlightenment, which brought tremendous secular challenges for Christian orthodoxy. Philosophers from the outside, such as Hume and Kant, and historic critics from the inside, such as, Welhausen and Strauss, challenged

²⁹Osbeck, 180-182.

the centuries old belief that the Bible was historically accurate.³⁰ The history of religions school relegated Christianity to just one among a plethora of religions--not better or more true than any of the others. An Anglican pastor, Samuel Stone, was deeply troubled by this turn of events. He wrote twelve hymns on the Apostles' Creed as a defense against these encroachments which he felt was destroying the church. This particular hymn was based on the phrases in the creed, "We believe in the Holy Catholic Church" and "the Communion of Saints." Music for the hymn was written by Samuel Wesley, grandson of Charles Wesley.³¹

The lyrics of the hymn draw deeply upon Paul's theology of the church. Jesus Christ is the foundation for the church (1 Co. 3:11). The church is God's new creation (2 Co. 5:17; Ga. 6:15), made clean by "the washing with water through the word" (Ep. 5:25-26), chosen as a bride for her husband (Ep. 5:27-28, 31-32), and bought with God's own blood (Ac. 20:28). The church exists that "all nations might believe" (Ro. 16:26), yet in spite of this international diversity, it is still a single body (1 Co. 12:13). The church serves one Lord, Jesus Christ; it embraces a single faith, the faith of the apostles; and it experiences a common birth, the "washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit" (Ep. 4:4-6; Tit. 3:5). On her lips is a single confession, the name of Jesus (Ro. 10:8-13), and together her members participate in the same spiritual meal, the eucharist (1 Co. 10:16-17). Her single hope is the "glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ" (Tit. 2:13), and while she waits for him, she has been blessed with every spiritual blessing (Ep. 1:3) and given every spiritual grace (Ep. 4:7-8).

Still, the church's sojourn on earth is not without conflict. She experiences toil (1 Co. 15:58), tribulation (Ro. 12:12) and war (2 Co. 10:3-5). Only at the end, when Christ has delivered up the kingdom to the Father after all enemies have been subdued, will there be eternal peace (1 Co. 15:24-28). In the meantime, the church looks at what is yet invisible, the eternal glory to come (2 Co. 4:16-18), and she waits until that day when she receives the victor's crown (2 Ti. 4:8). Until then, she rejoices in her union with the triune God, the Spirit, the Lord Jesus and the Father, who is above all, through all and in all (Ep. 4:4-6). She participates in spiritual communion with the saints who already sleep in Jesus (Ro. 14:9). In the end, both the living and the dead will be united together in resurrection and transformation at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Th. 4:14-15).

³⁰W. Hordern, *A Laymen's Guide to Protestant Theology* (New York: Macmillan, 1968) 29-50.

³¹Osbeck, 243-244.

Doxology

The term doxology denotes an ascription of praise to God, and especially in the New Testament, an expression of praise with respect to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Quite literally, it means “a word of glory”, deriving from the two Greek words *doxa* (doxa = radiance, splendor, glory) and *logos* (logos = a word, an utterance). The use of doxologies in worship derive from the Bible itself.

Doxology in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, the earliest doxologies are found in the age of the patriarchs. The basic form is “Blessed be Yahweh...” (Ge. 9:26; 14:19-20; 24:27; Ex. 18:10). Such a blessing extols or ascribes to Yahweh power, glory, holiness and honor. These expressions are further developed in David’s prayers of thanksgiving, first when the ark was brought to Jerusalem after its exile (1 Chr. 16:36), and later, when he received the generous gifts from the tribes to be used for the construction of the 1st temple (1 Chr. 29:10-13). Short doxologies are to be found at the conclusion of each of the first four collections of the five books of the Psalms (41:13; 72:18-19; 89:52; 106:48). Here, one finds the double “Amen and Amen” as a conclusion. The final Psalm which ends the fifth collection is itself an extended doxology (Ps. 150). The psalms are replete with imperative verbs exhorting praise to God:

Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength! (Ps. 29:1-2)

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name! (Ps. 96:7-9)

Proclaim the power of God! (Ps. 68:34-35)

Not the least of these is the Hebrew expression *Hallelujah*, which occurs some 24 times in the Psalter. The so-called “Hallelujah psalms” either begin or end with this doxology (Psalms 104-106, 111-113, 115-117, 135, 146-150).

The doxologies in the psalms suggest that such expressions were particularly employed as liturgical acclamations, since the psalms themselves served as the ancient prayer book for the assemblies of the tribes at Mt. Zion on the great *haggim* festivals.³² In the post-exilic period, when Ezra came to Jerusalem, the continued development of this liturgical practice can be seen in the erection of a pulpit for the reading of the Torah. At the opening of the Torah scroll, the people stood. Ezra offered a doxology to God, and the people lifted their hands and responded with the

³² The various scholarly explorations of the psalms within the context of Israelite worship is beyond the scope of this study. It is sufficient to point out that virtually all scholars agree that the psalms functioned in formal settings of worship, cf. N. Ridderbos and P. Craigie, *ISBE* (1986) 3.1033-1036.

“Amen” (Ne. 8:5-8). This use of doxology as a constituent part of public worship continued in the synagogue up through the time of Jesus and subsequently was taken up by the Christian church.

Doxology in the New Testament

By the time one reaches the period of the apostles, the use of doxology had been well-established. The most basic form, “Blessed be...”, is retained (Lk. 1:68; 2 Co. 1:3; Ep. 1:3; 1 Pe. 1:3),³³ but variants are also to be found, such as:

Worthy is the Lamb! (Rv. 5:12; cf. 4:11; 5:9)
Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty! (Rv. 4:8)

The divine qualities that generally are extolled, often by the introductory phrase “to him be...”, include his glory (Ro. 16:27; Ga. 1:5), honor (1 Ti. 1:17; 6:16; Rv. 7:12), power (1 Pe. 5:11; Rv. 1:6), salvation (Rv. 19:1), majesty and authority (Jude 25). Frequently, the term “forever” is included as part of the doxology along with a concluding “amen” (Ro. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:27; Ga. 1:5; Ep. 3:21; Phi. 4:20; 1 Ti. 1:17; 6:16; 2 Ti. 4:18; He. 13:21; 1 Pe. 4:11; 5:11; 2 Pe. 3:18). In fact, the spoken “amen” in Christian worship can by itself be a doxology to the glory of God (2 Co. 1:20).

Special reference should be made to Trinitarian doxologies. While the term “Trinity” is not in the New Testament, the regular acclamation of the Father and the Son certainly are!

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! (Ep. 1:3)
To the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! (Ro. 16:27)
...to him [the God of peace], through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. (He. 13:21)
To the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore. (Jude 25)
To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen. (Ep. 3:21)
To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, forever and ever! (Rv. 5:13)

While the doxology in the Lord’s Prayer (Mt. 6:13) has several variants, and in fact, is not found in the earliest texts of Matthew,³⁴ the traditional use of this prayer in the

³³ Here, the underlying Greek word is eu]loghto<j (eulogEtos = blessed, well spoken of), and it is to be distinguished from maka<rioj (makarios = happy, blessed), which is not usual in doxologies to God.

³⁴ The words “for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen!” appears in neither Codex Sinaiticus nor Codex Vaticanus (both from the 4th century), though the doxology appears in later manuscripts of

churches appends the substance of 1 Chr. 29:11-13 as a conclusion, and this form is familiar from older English versions, such as, the KJV and others. It was adopted by the Eastern Church and is used by most Protestant Churches (though it is not used by the Roman Church).

Some of the most beloved doxologies in the New Testament are:

Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest! (Mt. 21:9)

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen. (Ro. 11:36)

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen. Ep. 3:20-21)

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Ti. 1:17)

God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen nor can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen. (1 Ti. 6:15-16)

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forever! Amen. (Jude 25)

Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise! (Rv. 5:12)

Doxology in the Post-Apostolic Church

The disciples of the apostles continued the use of doxology in their worship and writings.

We praise Thee through the High-priest and Guardian of our souls, Jesus Christ, through whom be the glory and the majesty unto Thee both now and for all generations and forever and ever. Amen. (1 Clement 61.3)

In the recitation of the Lord's prayer, the early Christians were instructed to offer the Lord's prayer three times daily (probably corresponding with the three traditional hours of Jewish prayer), and the prayer was to conclude with the traditional doxology, "Thine is the power and the glory for ever and ever" (Didache 8). The celebration of the Eucharist, also, contains the doxologies "Thine is the glory for ever and ever" and "Thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever and ever" (Didache 9-10). Especially following the Trinitarian controversies, the phrases "through Christ"

and “through Christ and the Holy Spirit” and “to the Father and Son with the Holy Spirit in your holy church” were commonly used.³⁵ The *Gloria Patri* (Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost: As it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be forever, world without end. Amen”), also called the “Lesser Doxology”, was used as the standard response to the public reading of the Psalms from the 4th century and onward. It passed into the same usage in the *Book of Common Prayer*. The *Gloria in Excelsis* (Glory be to God on high), the so-called “Greater Doxology” taken directly from Luke 2:14, also came into common use in the 4th century at the beginning of the Eucharistic service. The English Reformers in 1552 shifted it to the end of the service, probably out of deference to Matthew 26:30.³⁶

More recently, doxologies have become familiar elements in Christian hymnody, both traditional and contemporary. The Anglican bishop Thomas Ken (1637-1711) composed the widely used Doxology hymn:

*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. Amen.*

Doxologies remain a constant feature in Christian music right up to the present day.

³⁵ *ISBE* (1979) 1.989.

³⁶ F Colquhoun, *EDT* (1984) 334.