

STORY OF GOSPEL HYMNS

Sankey's Collection of Sacred Songs and Solos

by

Ira D. Sankey

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CHAPTER ONE

A

A MIGHTY FORTRESS

Words by Martin Luther

Music by Martin Luther

*“A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing.”*

Martin Luther, the great leader of the Reformation, is the author of both the words and music of this famous hymn, probably written in 1521. Two of the most popular English translations are by Dr. F.H. Hedge and Thomas Carlyle.

While Luther was still living his enemies in the Roman Catholic Church declared that the whole German people were singing themselves into Luther's doctrines, and that his hymns “destroyed more souls than all his writings and sermons.”

During the prolonged contest of the Reformation period “*A Mighty Fortress*” was of incalculable benefit and comfort to the Protestant people, and it became the national hymn of Germany.

Gustavus Adolphus, the hero of the Thirty Years' War, used it as his battle-hymn, when he led his troops to meet Wallenstein.

The first line of this hymn is inscribed on Luther's monument in Wittenburg. Luther himself found great comfort in his hymn. When dangers thickened around him he would turn to his companion, Melancthon, and say: “Come, Philip, let us sing the 46th Psalm” – and they would sing it in this characteristic version.

* * *

In 1720 a remarkable revival began in a town in Moravia. Jesuits opposed it, and the meetings were prohibited. Those who still assembled were seized and imprisoned in stables and cellars.

At David Nitschmann's house, where a hundred and fifty persons gathered, the police broke in and seized the books. Not dismayed, the congregation struck up the stanza of Luther's hymn,

“And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us;
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us.”

Twenty heads of families were for this sent to jail, including Nitschmann, who was treated with special severity. He finally escaped, fled to the Moravians at Herrnhut, became a bishop, and afterwards joined the Wesleys in 1735 in their expedition to Savannah, Georgia.

A SHELTER IN THE TIME OF STORM

Words by V.J. Charlesworth
Music by Ira D. Sankey

*“The Lord's our rock, in Him we hide,
A shelter in the time of storm.”*

I found this hymn in a small paper published in London, called *“The Postman.”*

It was said to be a favorite song of the fishermen on the north coast of England, and they were often heard singing it as they approached their harbors in the time of storm. As the hymn was set to a weird minor tune, I decided to compose one that would be more practical, one that could be more easily sung by the people.

A SINNER FORGIVEN

Words by Jeremiah J. Callahan
Music by I.B. Woodbury

*“To the hall of the feast came the sinful and fair;
She heard in the city that Jesus was there.”*

“Mrs. F. Markham, connected with a large and well-known piano factory, was leading an ungodly and heedless life,” says a London periodical.

“One day he saw an announcement that Moody and Sankey were to open a mission at St. Pancras that evening. Instantly he resolved to go and hear the singing. He and a companion reached the hall in good time, as they thought, only to find it crowded to the doors.

“An overflow meeting was announced at a neighboring church, and thither they went. By and by Mr. Sankey sang *“To the hall of the feast came the sinful and fair.”* As Markham listened, his past life seemed to rise before him; the tears rushed into his eyes; his heart seemed broken.

“Coming out, he asked his companion what he thought of it. ‘Oh,’ was the careless reply, ‘he is a nice singer.’ ‘Is that all? It has broken my heart.’ Ere long he could say, in the words of the song, *‘He looked on his lost one; my sins are forgiven.’*

“When he got home his wife was amazed at what had come over him, and could not make out where he had been. She had been converted years before, but had backslidden. She accompanied him to the mission on the following evening, and was happily received. The man became a Christian worker, and is the founder and superintendent of the Tahhall Road Factory Lads’ Home and Institution.”

ABIDE WITH ME

Words by H.F. Lyte
Music by William H. Monk

*“Abide with me! Fast falls the eventide,
The darkness deepens – Lord, with me abide.”*

One of the many instances of the power of this hymn has been recorded by Dr. Theodore L. Cuyler:

“During my active pastorate I often got better sermons from my people than I ever gave them. I recall now a most touching and sublime scene that I once witnessed in the death-chamber of a noble woman who had suffered for many months from an excruciating malady. The end was drawing near. She seemed to be catching a foregleam of the glory that awaited her. With tremulous tones she began to recite Henry Lyte’s matchless hymn, *‘Abide With Me! Fast falls the eventide.’* One line after another was feebly repeated, until, with a rapturous sweetness, she exclaimed:

*‘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.’*

“As I came away from that room, which had been as the vestibule of heaven, I understood how the *‘light of eventide’* could be only a flashing forth of the overwhelming glory that plays forever around the throne of God.”

* * *

Henry Francis Lyte wrote this hymn in 1847, in his fifty-fourth year, when he felt the eventide of life approaching. For twenty years he had ministered to a lowly congregation in Devonshire. He decided to spend the next winter in Italy, on account of rapidly declining health. On a Sunday in September – in weakness, and against the advice of his friends – he preached a farewell sermon to his much-loved people, and in the evening of the same day he wrote this immortal hymn.

He died a few weeks later, his last words being “Peace, joy!”

ALL TO CHRIST I OWE

Words by Mrs. Elvina M. Hall

Music by John T. Grape

*“I hear the Saviour say,
Thy strength indeed is small.”*

“Our church was undergoing some alterations,” writes Mr. Grape, “and the cabinet organ was placed in my care. Thus afforded a pleasure not before enjoyed. I delighted myself in playing over our Sunday school hymns. I determined to give tangible shape to a theme that had been running in my mind for some time – to write, if possible, an answer to Mr. Brandbury’s beautiful piece, *‘Jesus paid it all.’*”

“I made it a matter of prayer and study, and gave to the public the music, now known as the tune to *‘All to Christ I owe.’* It was pronounced very poorly by my choir and my friends, but my dear wife persistently declared that it was a good piece of music and would live.

“Time has proved the correctness of her judgment.

“Soon after Mr. Schrick called on me to select anything new in music that I had to offer. On hearing this piece he expressed his pleasure with it, and stated that Mrs. Elvina M. Hill had written some words which he thought would just suit the music. I gave him a copy of it, and it was soon sung in several churches and well received.

“At the suggestion of friends, I sent a copy to Professor Theodore Perkins, and it was published in *‘Sabbath Chords.’* Under the providence of God, it has been going ever since. I trust that it has not failed in the accomplishment of some good to my fellow-men, for the glory of God.

* * *

“On New Year’s night, 1886, some missionaries were holding open-air services in order to attract passers-by to a near-by mission, where meetings were to be held later. *“All to Christ I owe”* was sung, and after a gentleman had given a short address he hastened away to the mission. He soon heard footsteps close behind him and a young woman caught up with him and said:

“I heard you addressing the open-air meeting just now; do you think, sir, that Jesus could save a sinner like me?” The gentleman replied that there was no doubt about that, if she was anxious to be saved. She told him that she was a servant girl, and had left her place that morning after a disagreement with her mistress. As she had been wandering about the streets in the dark, wondering where she was to spend the night, the sweet melodies of this hymn had attracted her, and she drew near and listened attentively.

“As the different verses were being sung, she felt that the words surely had something to do with her. Through the whole service she seemed to hear what met her oppressed soul’s need at that moment. God’s Spirit had showed her what a poor, sinful and wretched creature she was, and had led her to ask what she must do.

“On hearing her experience, the gentleman took her back to the mission and left her with the ladies in charge. The young, wayward woman was brought to Christ that night. A situation was secured for her in a minister’s family. There she became ill and had to be taken to a hospital. She rapidly failed and it became evident that she would not be long on earth. One day the gentleman whom she met on New Year’s night was visiting her in the ward. After quoting a few suitable verses of Scripture, he repeated her favorite hymn, “*All to Christ I owe.*” On coming to the fourth verse –

*“When from my dying bed
My ransomed soul shall rise,
Then ‘Jesus paid it all,’
Shall rend the vaulted skies,”*

She seemed overwhelmed with the thought of coming glory, and repeated the chorus so precious to her,

*“Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe.”*

Two hours afterward she passed away.

ALMOST PERSUADED

Words by P.P. Bliss

Music by P.P. Bliss

*“‘Almost persuaded,’ now to believe;
‘Almost persuaded,’ Christ to receive.”*

“He who is almost persuaded is almost saved, and to be almost saved is to be entirely lost,” were the words with which Mr. Brundage ended one of his sermons.

“P.P. Bliss, who was in the audience, was much impressed with the thought, and immediately set about the composition of what proved to be one of his most popular songs.

One of the most impressive occasions in which this hymn was sung was in the Agricultural Hall in London, in 1874, when Mr. Gladstone was present. At the close of his sermon Mr. Moody asked the congregation to bow their heads, while I sang “*Almost Persuaded*.” The stillness of death prevailed throughout the audience of over fifteen thousand, as souls were making their decisions for Christ.

* * *

“While engaged in evangelistic work in western Pennsylvania,” writes A. J. Furman, “I saw the people deeply moved by singing. I had begun my preparation to preach in the evening, from the text, “**Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian,**’ when it occurred to me that if Mrs. B–, an estimable Christian and a most excellent singer, would sing, ‘*Almost Persuaded*’ as a solo, great good might be done.

“At once I left the room and called on the lady, who consented to sing as requested. When I had finished my sermon, she sang the song with wonderful pathos and power. It moved many to tears. Among them was the principal of the high school, who could not resist the appeal through that song. He and several others found the Pearl of Great Price before the next day. After the close of the sermon, I spoke to Mrs. B– about the effect of her singing, and she told me that she had been praying earnestly all that afternoon, that he might so sing as to win sinners for her Saviour that night, and her prayers were surely answered.”

* * *

“It was Sunday night, November 18, 1883,” writes Mr. S.W. Tucker, of Clapton, London, “when I heard you sing ‘*Almost Persuaded*’ in the Priory Hall, Islington, London, and God used that song in drawing me to the feet of Jesus. I was afraid to trust myself in His hands for fear of man.

“For six weeks that hymn was ringing in my ears, till I accepted the invitation. I came, and am now rejoicing in the Lord, my Saviour. How often, with tears of joy and love, have I thought of those meetings and of you and dear Mr. Moody, who showed me and other sinners where there was love, happiness and joy.”

* * *

Said a young man to Mr. Young: “I intend to become a Christian some time, but not now. Don’t trouble yourself about me. I’ll tend to it in good time.”

A few weeks after, the man was injured in a saw-mill, and as he lay dying, Mr. Young was called to him. He found him in despair, saying: “Leave me alone. At your meeting I was almost persuaded, but I would not yield, and now it is too late. Oh, get my wife, my sisters and my brothers to seek God, and do it now, but leave me alone, for I am lost.”

Within an hour he passed away, with these words on his lips, "I am lost, I am lost, just because I would not yield when I was almost persuaded."

ARE YOU COMING HOME TONIGHT?

Words by C.C.

Music by James McGranahan

A wild young soldier was induced to attend a Gospel meeting in London. As he entered, the congregation was singing "*Are You Coming Home to-night?*" The song made a deep impression upon him. He came back the next night, and he continued to attend until he was saved.

"I had to come," he said; "that hymn would not let me stay away. I could not sleep at night. All night long that question of the song, both in the words and music, kept returning to me, demanding an answer: '*Are You Coming Home to-night?*'"

* * *

The original of this hymn was written by a young lady in Scotland, who signed herself "C.C." Falling into Mr. McGranahan's hands, he arranged the poem somewhat differently, and set the words to music. The song has brought blessing to many.

ARISE, MY SOUL, ARISE

Words by Charles Wesley

Music by Lewis Edson

*"Arise, my soul, arise,
Shake off thy guilty fears."*

First published in 1742 under the title, "*Behold the Man,*" this became one of the most useful of Charles Wesley's numerous hymns. In universal use in English countries, and translated into many languages, it has been the direct instrumentality in the conversion of thousands of souls. It has found expression in the exultant cry on the lips of many a dying saint.

"I have a record," said a Wesleyan missionary laboring in the West Indies, "of two hundred persons, young and old, who received the most direct evidence of the forgiveness of their sins while singing '*Arise, my soul.*' The conversion of the greater number of these persons took place while I was a missionary abroad."

ART THOU WEARY?

Words by J.M. Neale, trans
Music by Henry W. Baker

*“Are thou weary, art thou languid,
Art thou sore distressed?”*

“Some years ago,” writes Mr. James A. Watson, of Blackburn, England, “I often visited one of our adult Sunday-school scholars who had just been brought to the knowledge of the Saviour. She was formerly a Roman Catholic, but was brought to our church one Sunday evening by a fellow-worker in a cotton mill. She heard a Gospel of full and free salvation, embraced it, and gradually became a spirit-filled consistent Christian.

“She was laid low with a serious illness, but it was always a pleasure to visit her.

“On one occasion she told me that the evening before, when she had been left alone for the night, a cloud came over her spirit, the sense of loneliness grew upon her, and she seemed forsaken of God. All looked black, and she dreaded the long, lone night. This was a most unusual thing and she wondered why it should be so.

“Just then, in the quiet night, she heard steps on the flags of the foot-way. A man wearing the clogs of the factory operator was coming along, evidently returning late from some religious meeting. He was full of joy, for before he reached the house where my scholar was lying awake, he struck up in a joyful and loud song,

*“Art thou weary, art thou languid?
Art thou sore distressed?
‘Come to Me,’ saith One;
And coming, be at rest!”*

The singer, ‘an angel in clogs,’ went on his way, singing aloud out of a full heart; but deep down into the heart of the lonely woman went the words, ‘Be at rest!’

“Again she cast herself upon the LORD; the cloud parted, peace and rest filled her heart, and she doubted no more.”

ASLEEP IN JESUS

Words by Mrs. Margaret Mackay
Music by W.B. Bradbury

*“Asleep in Jesus! blessed sleep!
From which none ever wake to weep.”*

“I had been driven in a friend’s pony-carriage through some of the exquisite green lanes in Devonshire,” wrote the author of this hymn the year before her death.

“We paused at Pennycross, attracted by a rural burial-ground, and went in to look at the graves. It was a place of such sweet, entire repose as to leave a lasting impression on the memory. There were no artificial walks or decorations, but the grass was very green, and there were no unsightly signs of neglect.

“On one of the stones were the words, ‘*Sleeping in Jesus.*’ It was in such entire keeping with the lovely and peaceful surroundings that it clung to my thoughts. On arriving at home I took a pencil and commenced writing the hymn, little thinking that it was destined to find so much favor, and that part of it would be inscribed on many tombstones.”

Mrs. Mackay was born in Scotland, and died at Cheltenham, England, in 1887, at the age of eighty-five. Her husband was a distinguished lieutenant-colonel in the British army.

AT THE CROSS

Words by Isaac Watts
Music by R.E. Hudson

*“Alas! and did my Saviour bleed?
And did my SOVEREIGN die?”*

“*At the Cross*” is the name of the new tune by R.E. Hudson for the old hymn by Watts, “*Alas, and did my Saviour bleed.*”

The words were first published in Watts’ “*Hymns and Spiritual Songs,*” in 1707, under the title, “*Godly Sorrow Arising from the Sufferings of Christ.*” In “*Sacred Songs and Solos*” the new tune is used to the hymn “*I’m not ashamed to own my Lord.*”

The children’s evangelist, E.P. Hammond, credits this hymn with his conversion, when he was only seventeen years old.

~ B ~

BEAUTIFUL RIVER

Words by Robert Lowry
Music by Robert Lowry

*“Shall we gather at the river
Where bright angel feet have trod?”*

On a sultry afternoon in July, 1864, Dr. Lowry was sitting at his study table in Elliott Place, Brooklyn, when the words of the hymn, “*Shall we gather at the river?*” came to him. He recorded them hastily, and then sat down before his parlor organ and composed the tune which is now sung in all the Sunday-schools of the world. In speaking of the song, Dr. Lowry said:

“It is brass-band music, has a march movement, and for that reason has become popular, though, for myself, I do not think much of it. Yet on several occasions I have been deeply moved by the singing of this very hymn.

“Going from Harrisburg to Lewisburg once I got into a car filled with half-drunken lumbermen. Suddenly one of them struck up, ‘*Shall we gather at the river?*’ and they sang it over and over again, repeating the chorus in a wild, boisterous way. I did not think so much of the music then, as I listened to those singers; but I did think that perhaps the spirit of the hymn, the words so flippantly uttered, might somehow survive and be carried forward into the lives of those careless men, and ultimately lift them upward to the realization of the hope expressed in the hymn.

“A different appreciation of it was evinced during the Robert Raikes centennial. I was in London, and had gone to a meeting in the Old Bailey to see some of the most famous Sunday-school workers of the world. They were present from Europe, Asia and America. I sat in a rear seat alone. After there had been a number of addresses delivered in various languages I was preparing to leave, when the chairman of the meeting announced that the author of ‘*Shall we gather at the river?*’ was present, and I was requested by name to come forward. Men applauded and women waved their handkerchiefs as I went to the platform. It was a tribute to the hymn; but I felt, after it was over, that I had perhaps done some little good in the world.”

* * *

The year after it was written, on Children’s Day, in Brooklyn, when the assembled Sunday-schools of the city met in bewildering array, this song was sung by more than forty thousand voices. There was not a child from the gutter or a mission waif who did not know it.

* * *

An American lady writing from Cairo, who was allowed to visit the military hospital soon after some wounded men had been brought in from a skirmish, says:

“The three hours we could stay were full of work for heart and hand. One young soldier from a Highland regiment especially excited my interest. He had lost a limb, and the doctor said he could not live through the night. I stopped at his side to see whether there was anything that I could do for him. He lay with closed eyes; and as his lips moved I caught the words, ‘Mother, mother.’ I dipped my handkerchief in a basin of iced water, and bathed his forehead where the fever flushes burned.

““Oh, that is good!” he said, opening his eyes. Seeing me bending over him, he caught my hand and kissed it. ‘Thank you, lady.’ he said; ‘it ‘minds me o’ mother.’

“I asked him if I could write to his mother. No, he said; the surgeon had promised to write; but could I, would I, sing to him? I hesitated a moment, and looked around. The gleam on the yellow water of the Nile, as the western rays slanted down, caught my eye and suggested the river the streams of which shall make glad the city of God. I began to sing in a low voice the Gospel hymn, ‘*Shall we gather at the river?*’ Eager heads were raised around us to listen more intently, while bass and tenor voices, weak and tremulous, came in on the chorus, –

*‘Yes, we’ll gather at the river,
The beautiful, the beautiful river;
Gather with the saints at the river
That flows by the throne of God.’*

“When the song was ended, I looked into the face of the boy – for he was not over twenty – and asked, ‘Shall you be there?’

““Yes, I’ll be there, through what the Lord Jesus has done for me.’ he answered, with his blue eyes shining, while a ‘light that never was on sea or land’ irradiated his face. The tears gathered in my eyes as I thought of the mother, in her far-off Scottish home, watching and waiting for tidings of her soldier boy, who was breathing away his life in an Egyptian hospital.

““Come again, lady, come again,’ I heard on all sides as we left the barracks. I shall go; but I shall not find my Scottish laddie, for by to-morrow’s reveille he will have crossed the river.”

BEAUTIFUL VALLEY OF EDEN

Words by W.O. Cushing
Music by William F. Sherwin

*“Beautiful valley of Eden!
Sweet is thy noon-tide calm.”*

“One day in 1875 I was reaching up for a blessing,” says the author of these words, “when suddenly there came down upon my heart a vision of the heavenly country. I seemed to look down upon a river that like a mighty tide rolled beneath me.

“Across, on the other side of this river, I saw an enchanted land; its hills and valleys were sleeping in a heavenly calm. It was more beautiful than words can tell, and my heart seemed to be there. As I gazed on the scene, there came to my lips the words, ‘*Beautiful valley of Eden.*’ “The vision remained until I had written down the hymn; then it gradually faded from my sight. but I want to say that the beauty of the hymn is largely due to Mr. Sherwin, who, by his rich melody, has reached a deeper chord than any mere words could ever have reached.”

BEULAH LAND

Words by E.P. Stites
Music by John R. Sweeney

*“I’ve reached the land of corn and wine,
And all its riches freely mine.”*

First sung at Ocean Grove, New Jersey, at a great gathering of Methodists, this hymn at once became very popular.

It has been sung in every land where the name of Christ is known. The secretary of the Young Men’s Christian Association at Plymouth, England, wrote me a beautiful story of a young lady, who sang it on her dying bed as she passed into the land that is fairer than day.

I sang this favorite song over the dead body of my friend, Mr. Sweeney, at the church of which he was a leading member, in West Chester, Pennsylvania, on the day of his burial.

BLESSED ASSURANCE

Words by Fanny J. Crosby
Music by Mrs. Joseph F. Knapp

*“Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
O, what a foretaste of glory divine!”*

“During the recent war in the Transvaal,” said a gentleman at my meeting in Exeter Hall, London, in 1900, “when the soldiers were going to the front were passing another body of soldiers whom they recognized, their greetings used to be, ‘Four-nine-four, boys; four-nine-four;’ and the salute would invariably be answered with ‘Six further on, boys; six further on.’ the significance of this was that, in ‘*Sacred Songs and Solos*,’ a number of copies of the small edition of which had been sent to the front, number 494 was, ‘*God be with you till we meet again*;’ and six further on than 494, or number 500, was ‘*Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine.*’”

* * *

One of the most popular and useful of the “*Gospel Hymns*,” this was sung by a large delegation of Christian Endeavors on the train to Minneapolis, some years ago. And it was often sung at night as the street-cars were crowded with passengers on their way to the Convention Hall, greatly to the delight of the people of that city.

BLEST BE THE TIE THAT BINDS

Words by John Fawcett

Music by H.G. Nageli

*“Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love.”*

Dr. John Fawcett was the pastor of a small church at Wainsgate, and was called from there to a larger church in London in 1772. He accepted the call and preached his farewell sermon. The wagons were loaded with his books and furniture, and all was ready for the departure, when his parishioners gathered around him, and with tears in their eyes begged of him to stay.

His wife said, “Oh, John, John, I cannot bear this.” “Neither can I,” exclaimed the good parson, “and we will not go. Unload the wagons and put everything as it was before.”

His decision was hailed with great joy by his people, and he wrote the words of this hymn in commemoration of the event.

This song, and “*God be with you till we meet again,*” are the most useful farewell hymns in the world.

* * *

Mr. Moody used to tell of a Sunday-school teacher, to whom he had given a class of girls, who one day came to Mr. Moody’s store much disheartened. He had suffered from hemorrhage of the lungs, and his doctor had ordered him to leave Chicago.

He was sad because he felt that he had not made a true effort to save his class.

At Mr. Moody’s proposal that they go to visit each of the class members, they took a carriage and at once began the work, the young man in his feebleness saying what he could to each. At a farewell meeting where they were all gathered, they endeavored to sing “*Blest be the tie that binds,*” but their hearts were full and their voices failed. Every member of the class yielded her heart to God.

~ C ~

CALLING NOW

Words by P.P. Bliss

Music by P.P. Bliss

*“This loving Saviour stands patiently;
Tho’ oft rejected, calls again for thee.”*

A song somewhat similar to this I remember singing as a solo in Mr. Moody’s Tabernacle in Chicago at the close of an evangelistic meeting in 1872. Mr. Bliss came in late and stood just inside the door, listening.

At the close of the meeting he came up to the platform and spoke enthusiastically about the piece, and remarked that he also would try to write a hymn on “The Prodigal.”

Not long afterward I heard him sing this beautiful hymn, which he himself entitled “*Calling Now*.” It has been especially useful in inquiry-meetings and at the close of evangelistic addresses. I have often heard it sung with great effect – very softly by a choir, while the workers were speaking to the anxious ones – and its soft, sweet, pleading tones were always blessed to the hearers.

“COME”

Words by James G. Johnson
Music by James McGranahan

*“O word of words the sweetest,
O word, in which there lie –”*

As these words were sung at one of our meetings in Baltimore, a man arose and left the building, declaring that he had never heard such twaddle in all his life. When he reached home he tore the hymn out of his hymn-book and threw it into the fire; but he said afterward that the words still rang in his heart and that he could not get rid of them. At last he came to Mr. Moody and said: “I am a vile sinner, and I want you to tell me how I can come to Jesus and be saved.”

Moody was enabled to lead him into the light, and the man afterward declared that this was the sweetest hymn in all the book.

COME BELIEVING

Words by D.W. Whittle (“El. Nathan”)
Music by James McGranahan

*“Once again the Gospel message
From the Saviour you have heard.”*

A lawyer from the West sank so low as to become a tramp in the streets of New York.

He was fifty-four years old and a homeless, penniless wretch.

As he stumbled by the Florence Mission one night the windows were open and he stopped a moment to listen to the singing. They sang:

*“Once again the Gospel message
From the Saviour you have heard;
Will you heed the invitation?
Will you turn and seek the Lord?”*

It came like the voice of God to him. His early training had been Christian, and he thought he would go in. He did so, and as he took his seat they were singing the second verse:

*“Many summers you have wasted,
Ripened harvest you have seen;
Winter snows by spring have melted,
Yet you linger in your sin.”*

He realized that his was a truthful picture of his own life, and listened to the third verse, ending:

*“While the Spirit now is striving,
Yield, and seek the Saviour’s side.”*

Deeply convicted, he jumped to his feet and said, “I will yield, I will seek the Saviour’s side.”

He was converted, and attended the meetings regularly. He secured good employment, wrote to his family and becoming reconciled to his wife and children, he returned West to the old home, where he lived as an earnest Christian.

COME, GREAT DELIVERER, COME

Words by Fanny J. Crosby
Music by W.H. Doane

*“O hear my cry, be gracious now to me,
Come, Great Deliv’rer, come.”*

“A short time ago, about twelve o’clock one frosty Saturday night, when the keen winter wind was driving all indoors who had a home, a poor woman, in utter misery and despair, was pacing up and down along the Thames,” writes a friend in England. “She had wandered into a mission hall during the evening and had restlessly come out, carrying no remembrance of anything that had been said; but these lines from a hymn still sounded in her ears:

“She cried aloud: ‘But there is no deliverer for me.’

“Very soon she was met by some Christian workers, who were spending the night in seeking to gather in such outcasts as she. They took her to a home. The human tenderness revealed to her the divine love. If strangers had thus received her and cared for her, would not her Heavenly Father, whose love she had heard of, take her? Thus she was led to the feet of Jesus, and to find that her sins were many and all forgiven.

“She said: ‘Things since then have been up and down with me, but I have never lost the peace I found that morning.’”

COME, SINNER, COME

Words by W.E. Witter

Music by H.R. Palmer

*“While Jesus whispers to you,
Come, sinner, come.”*

Mr. Witter has said regarding this hymn:

“I may say that the origin of ‘*While Jesus whispers to you*’ is forever linked with some of the most sacred experiences of my life. I see the old farmhouse in New York State, overlooking the beautiful Wyoming Valley, and those Western hills, which to my childhood eyes were the rim of the world.

“It was in the summer of 1877 and I was home from college to nurse my sainted mother through her last illness, and at the same time I was teaching a term in school.

“The biography of P.P. Bliss was in our home, and his sweet songs were running through my mind from morn till evening. I prayed that even I might be inspired to write such hymns as would touch hard hearts and lead them to Christ.

“One Saturday afternoon, while bunching the hay which had been mown along the roadside, the words of this little hymn seemed to sing themselves into my soul, and with music almost identical with that to which they were later set by the sweet singer, Palmer.

“I hastened to the house and, running upstairs, knelt beside the bed of a brother, for whose salvation my mother was in constant prayer. There, upon my knees, I transcribed the words to paper, with a strange consciousness that they God-given and that God would use them.”

And God had used them, for this hymn has been found very helpful as an invitation at Revival meetings.

COME, THOU FOUNT

Words by R. Robinson

Music by John Wyetlo

*“Come thou Fount of ev’ry blessing
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace.”*

The author of this hymn, born in 1735, was of lowly parentage.

At the age of fourteen his widowed mother sent him to London to learn the trade of barber and hair-dresser. His master found him more given to reading than to his profession. While in London he attended meetings held by the great evangelist, George Whitefield, became converted, and began to study for the ministry.

In the latter part of his life Mr. Robinson often indulged in frivolous habits. But on one occasion, while traveling in a stage-coach, he encountered a lady who soon compelled him to admit his acquaintance with religion. She had just been reading this hymn, and she asked his opinion of it, after having told him of the blessings it had brought to her heart.

He avoided the subject and turned her attention to some other topic; but the lady, who did not know to whom she was talking, soon returned to the hymn, expressing her strong admiration for its sentiments. Agitated beyond the power of controlling his emotion, Robinson broke out:

“Madam, I am the poor, unhappy man who composed that hymn many years ago, and I would give a thousand worlds, if I had them, to enjoy the feelings I had then.”

COME TO THE SAVIOUR

Words by George F. Root

Music by George F. Root

*“Come to the Saviour, make no delay;
Here in His word He’s shown us the way.”*

“In 1879 I was assisting in revival meetings in Danville, California,” writes the pastor of a Presbyterian Church at Oakland.

“The meetings were well attended and good interest was exhibited, but for a long time there were no conversions. In the neighborhood there was a man who, with his wife and children, attended the church regularly, and he was one of its liberal supporters. They were most excellent people, but could not be induced to profess Christ, and did not call themselves Christians.

“One day, while the men were holding services in the church the women were having a prayer-meeting in the manse nearby.

“In the course of the meeting they sang, ‘*Come to the Saviour, make no delay.*’ The singing over, they were about to engage in prayer, when the lady above referred to asked them to sing the last verse of this hymn. They sang:

*‘Think once again, He’s with us to-day;
Heed now His blest commands, and obey;
Hear now His accents tenderly say,
Will you, my children, come?’*

“The lady was greatly affected and when the singing ceased she said with deep emotion: ‘Yes, I will come; I have been very stubborn, but I will not stay away any longer.’ The women were all deeply moved, and prayed and praised God with warm hearts.

“When the word reached the men they were greatly encouraged at the good news. A revival followed, and at the close of a touching service a few days later, when a call was made for persons who desired to unite with the church, this lady and her husband were the first to respond. They were followed by some of their own children and many other persons - in all twenty-one.

“This hymn seemed to have been the means of reaching the wife’s heart, and of opening the way for the blessing which followed.”

COME UNTO ME

Words by Nathaniel Norton
Music by George C. Stebbins

*“‘Come unto Me!’ it is the Saviour’s voice
The Lord of life, who bids thy heart rejoice.”*

A man of culture and of extensive reading had given a good deal of thought to the subject of Christianity, but had never acknowledged himself a Christian until one evening at the close of an after-meeting in services conducted by Dr. George F. Pentecost in his own church in Brooklyn.

Then he arose and made a public confession of Christ as his Saviour.

That night, on his return home, he sat down and wrote the words of this hymn. The next day they were handed to Mr. Stebbins, who was then assisting Dr. Pentecost. Very soon afterward the hymn was sung in the meetings that were still in progress. It at once met with general favor, and for many years was used as a special song of invitation in our meetings, as well as by other evangelists in theirs.

COME UNTO ME, AND REST

Words by D. W. Whittle (“El Nathan”)

Music by James McGranahan

*“Brother, art thou worn and weary,
Tempted, tried, and sore oppress’d?”*

“On a cold night in the fall of 1885, a scantily clad man wandered into Bleecker Street,” writes a New York evangelist, under whose personal observation the incident came. “He was foot-sore and weary with much wandering, worn out for want of sleep, and faint from lack of food. The long, cold night was before him, and he knew he must walk the street till morning.

“He stepped into a doorway for a little rest. As he sat there he fell to pondering. He was solitary and sad-hearted. Drink had wrought fearful havoc with him, and had left him a homeless, friendless man. Home and loved ones, friends, money and position had all been sacrificed to this appetite. He felt that he was lost, and that no effort could save him. As he thus mused his reverie was broken by the sound of song.

“Surprised, he looked up in the direction from which the sound came, and saw across the way an illuminated sign on which were the words, ‘Florence Mission.’ Glad to get away from the chill and gloom of the street, he went into the mission. As he entered a lady was singing:

*‘Brother, art thou worn and weary,
Tempted, tried, and sore oppress’d?
Listen to the word of Jesus,
Come unto me, and rest!’*

“If there was one thing on earth that the man needed it was rest. Rest for the tired, famished body; rest for the tortured heart. ‘These things are not for me,’ he thought; I am too far gone.’

“He wandered the cold streets till morning, but never once did the words of this hymn leave him. The refrain constantly rang in his ears, ‘Come unto me and rest.’ He visited the mission many nights, and finally gave his heart to God.” The evangelist adds that this man has been his assistant for many years, and has won hundreds to Christ.

CONSECRATION

Words by Frances R. Havergal

Music by W. A. Mozart.

Arr. by H. P. Main

*“Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.”*

One of the finest consecration hymns in the world, this is a great favorite of the Christian Endeavor Society.

Miss Havergal told me of its origin, while we were seated in her home in South Wales. She had gone to London for a visit of five days. There were ten persons in the family she visited, most of them unconverted.

She prayed to God to give her all in the house, and before leaving everyone had received a blessing. The last night of her visit, after she had retired, the governess told her that the two daughters wished to see her. They were much troubled over their spiritual condition and were weeping, but Miss Havergal was able to show them the way of life, and they were both joyfully converted that night. She was too happy to sleep, she said, but spent most of the night in praise and renewal of her own consecration; and that night the words of this hymn formed themselves in her mind.

In 1879, shortly before her death, I gave a number of Bible-readings in Miss Havergal's home, when she told me the very interesting story of her life.

A few years later I met Miss Havergal's sister again under somewhat amusing conditions. I was traveling in Switzerland. While looking through a large music establishment I found quite a number of music boxes, which played several of the “Moody and Sankey” hymns. I asked the proprietor if these boxes had much of a sale. He said they had, though he did not think much of the tunes they played. Beside me was standing a lady, also looking at the music boxes.

She proved to be Miss Havergal's sister. As she turned around and saw me, she threw up her hands and said in a clear voice, “Oh, Mr. Sankey, is that you?”

The proprietor proceeded to make profound apologies and, selecting one of his best boxes, he presented it to me.

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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