

# THE HYMNS OF THE KIRTLAND TEMPLE DEDICATION

## A Festival of Hymns and History

**NOTE:** *The following hymns and readings are from a hymn festival created by Richard Clothier for the Mormon History Association annual meeting in Kirtland, Ohio. The hymn festival was held in the Kirtland Temple in May of 2003. It is a celebration of the hymns sung at the Kirtland Temple dedication on March 27, 1836. Richard Clothier's hymn festival is an excellent resource to use for celebrating the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Kirtland Temple in 2011.*

### **Prelude**

#### **Welcome:**

We welcome you to the House of the Lord, and we pray that the spirit which has uplifted and empowered Saints within these walls for 167 years will bless that which we do this morning. We invite you to unite your hearts and your voices in this hour, as we join in the singing of ten hymns chosen from the first hymnal of the church, compiled by Emma Smith according to divine mandate and published in the Kirtland print shop only a few weeks before the dedication of this building. Some of these hymns are well known to us today and are set to well-loved tunes; others will not be so familiar. This will be particularly true when, in the latter part of our service, we will sing the six hymns that were actually sung at the service of dedication here on March 27, 1836. On those hymns, we will sing the tunes that were originally used at that service, some of which will be unfamiliar to us. But regardless of whether a hymn is familiar or not, we urge every person here to sing with the same enthusiasm and passion that graced these songs when they were first sung by a rejoicing people within these very walls. May the Lord bless us as we worship together in spirit and in truth.

### **Invocation**

#### **Reader One: Redeemer of Israel**

When the Latter Day Saint movement was little more than a year old, William Wines Phelps read the Book of Mormon and moved his family to Kirtland to learn more about this new church. In a revelation dated June 1831, he was told that he should be baptized and ordained an elder.<sup>1</sup> Phelps' background in political affairs and journalism would be put to good use by the movement. Emma's first hymnal was not yet ready, and as Phelps worked to set up the printing press in Independence, one of the tasks he was given was to "correct" the hymns she had been selecting and begin printing them in *The Evening and the Morning Star*.<sup>2</sup> When the first issue came off the press in June, 1832, the back page contained six hymns, two by Phelps, one by Parley P. Pratt, and three hymns borrowed from other denominations and "corrected" (evidently modified to better express Latter Day Saint theology) by Phelps.<sup>3</sup>

In one of these hymns, Phelps was able to catch up in a particularly moving way both the excitement and the struggles of the new movement. He had experienced firsthand the trials of the early Saints and likened them, in these verses, to the tribulation of the children of Israel. "Redeemer of Israel" is one of the important musical expressions of the young Restoration movement.

#### **Reader Two and Three: Glorious Things of Thee and O Thou in Whose Presence**

Reader Two: "O Thou In Whose Presence," a hymn by Joseph Swain which appeared in 1813, sung to the same tune which we have just sung, and with strangely familiar words! While verses 4 through 9 of the hymn seem to have been inspired by portions of the Song of Solomon, it is the first three verses,

containing imagery from the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, that were no doubt the source and inspiration for Phelps' hymn, "Redeemer of Israel." The tune can be found in the middle of the three staves, in old "shape-note" notation. Here is a bit of history that offers a unique insight into the creativity of the early Saints as they endeavored to bring forth a body of hymnody that expressed their distinctive faith and belief.

Reader Three: Our next hymn, "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken," was not written by a Latter Day Saint, but it concerned one of the movement's most important concepts—Zion. And, particularly after Phelps' "fine-tuning" of the text, it was one that spoke deeply to the hearts of the early Saints. In fact, the minutes of the first three conferences to name the hymns used all mention this same hymn. It was among the six hymns printed in the first issue of *The Evening and the Morning Star*, and, like all of our hymns this morning, Emma included it in her first hymnal.

Written by the Englishman John Newton, who also authored "Amazing Grace," the text is based on ideas from Isaiah and the Psalms. The tune most often associated with it was written by Franz Joseph Haydn for the birthday of the Austrian Emperor Francis II. In more recent times, it has been used as the music for the German national anthem.

Newton's hymn must surely have resonated deeply with the early Saints as they pursued their untiring quest for a community of which "glorious things" would be spoken: "Zion, the city of our God!"

#### **Reader Four: *How Firm a Foundation***

W. W. Phelps was a giant among the early hymn writers. Of the 90 hymns in Emma's Kirtland hymnal, about 40 can be identified as having Latter Day Saint authors, the majority of them attributed to Phelps.<sup>4</sup> The remainder of the hymns in that collection were borrowed from various hymnals of that day, often without alteration. One of the best examples of these is "How Firm a Foundation." It first appeared in 1787 in a Baptist hymnal published in London, England,<sup>5</sup> and by 1820 it had found its way to this continent by way of an American edition printed in Philadelphia.

Like many hymns, this text is really a sermon in verse. In the first stanza, the Word of God is established as the sure foundation of the Christian faith. Then, the question is asked, "What more can God say than that which God has already said?" The answer to this question should be dear to the heart of every Latter Day Saint, as the verses which follow represent none other than the additional revelation of God's own self, in the first person. In these verses, many precious promises of God are given, such as: "Fear not, I am with thee, be not dismayed, for I am thy God, I will still give thee aid," and "I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless, and sanctify to thee thy deepest distress."

#### **Reader Five: *Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah***

We sing now another hymn that illustrates how easily the young church adapted existing hymns to express its own unique concepts, for example, the image of Saints in search of the promised land, as well as the imminent second coming of Christ. Compare the words of the hymn we are about to sing, "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah," with the original hymn. The first stanza of the original read:

**Guide me, O thou great Jehovah;  
Pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but thou are mighty;  
Hold me with thy powerful hand;  
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,  
Feed me till I want no more.  
Feed me till I want no more.**

The original hymn was written in the Welsh language by a man named William Williams, and it is best sung to a famous Welsh tune. The name of this stirring tune, “Cwm Rhondda,” is a reference to the coal-mining Rhondda valley in Wales, a country known for its rousing tunes, and for singing at the top of one’s voice, as well as from the bottom of one’s heart. Let’s sing this hymn in the full-voiced Welsh fashion this morning!

### **Reader Six: *O Happy Souls***

We turn now to the hymns that were actually sung by the congregation assembled in this place on March 27, 1836, for the service of dedication of The House of the Lord, the sacred place they had built with their untiring devotion and selfless sacrifice. As we sing these historic hymns, we will also learn the tunes to which the Saints sang these hymns on that occasion. The early hymnals did not contain music, nor was there any reference to suggested tunes, but the minutes of the dedication service did name the tunes used for the six hymns sung in that service,<sup>6</sup> and most of these have been located in tune books of the period.

The Conference Choir sings now a text adapted by W. W. Phelps from a hymn called “Lord of the Worlds Above,” a setting of Psalm 84 by Isaac Watts.<sup>7</sup> Phelps’ revision, which began with the lines, “O Happy Souls Who Pray,” was sung to the tune, “Weymouth,” found in a collection of tunes compiled in Boston in 1822 by the great American musician and educator, Lowell Mason.<sup>8</sup> Both the tune and text we now hear are faithful to the 1836 service of dedication held in this room.

### **Reader Seven: *How Pleased and Blest Was I***

Immediately before Joseph Smith stood to offer the dedicatory prayer on this Temple, another hymn by Isaac Watts was sung. This time the text remained true to the original poem by Watts, the man often referred to as “the father of English hymnody.” Watts wrote more than 600 hymns which, with their elegant and powerful simplicity, departed from the long tradition of English psalm-singing and ushered in what has been called the “golden age” of English hymnody. We will sing Watts’ hymn, “How Pleased and Blest Was I,” to the same tune that was used at the dedication service. Called “Dalston,” it is another tune found in Lowell Mason’s collection of 1822.

It would be difficult to find a more appropriate text to be sung within these sacred walls. For this is Isaac Watts’ poetic setting of Psalm 122, which begins, “I was glad when they said unto me, let us go to the house of the Lord.”

### **Reader Eight: *This Earth Was Once a Garden Place***

Our next hymn is another one that records indicate was one of the most frequently sung of all the hymns in the early years, including being used at the dedication of this building. It is yet another of the hymns written by W. W. Phelps, and it concerns the unique concept of Adam-ondi-Ahman. Although it was written before any location had been so designated, Emma included it in all her hymnals, even her Reorganization hymnal of 1861.

As has been mentioned, the early official hymnals of the church contained words only. However, several collections of hymns were published privately, and in 1844, a small hymnal was printed which bore the title, *A Collection of Sacred Hymns for the Use of the Latter Day Saints*. Published by J. C. Little and C. B. Gardner in Bellows Falls, Vermont, it contained 48 hymns, 31 of them with both a melody and a bass line of music. Although not an official hymnal, it is valuable in that it gives us a glimpse of the tunes that were suggested to be used with a few of the early hymns, at least in that one region of the church.

So, we sing now another of the hymns that were best loved by the Saints who lifted their voices in praise in this place so many years ago, and we will learn the tune to which they sang these words. Referred to by the Saints simply as “Adam-ondi-Ahman,” “This Earth Was Once a Garden Place” was set to an early American tune, “Prospect of Heaven,” which has been traced to the 1835 publication called *Southern Harmony*.<sup>9</sup> It has the distinct flavor and charm of the American folk song.

### **Reader Nine: *E'er Long the Veil Will Rend in Twain***

The story of Parley P. Pratt is well-known to all in this assembly this morning. At the age of 19, this self-educated, rugged outdoorsman traveled from New York to Ohio to clear some land west of Cleveland and build a log cabin for himself and his wife. After reading a copy of the Book of Mormon he became converted to the church, and it was ultimately his conversion of his friend, Sidney Rigdon, along with Rigdon’s Disciples of Christ followers, that began the work of the church in the Kirtland area.

A decade later, in 1840, Parley Pratt, Brigham Young, and John Taylor were laboring as missionary apostles in England, and found their work hindered by a lack of Latter Day Saint hymnals in that country. Emma was still working on her second hymnal, which was eventually printed in Nauvoo, but not until 1841, so they took matters into their own hands and promptly published their own collection, referred to today as the Manchester hymnal. No less than 47 of the 271 hymns in that 1840 collection were authored by Parley P. Pratt, who became to that hymnal what W. W. Phelps was to the Kirtland hymnal. It is interesting to note that Emma’s forthcoming Nauvoo hymnal will go on to become the basis for her 1861 hymnal for the Reorganization and the collections that followed it, while the Manchester hymnal is the work from which the hymnals of the Utah-based church flow.

“E’er Long the Veil Will Rend In Twain,” is an eloquent expression of a fervent belief in the glory, and imminence, of the Second Coming. Set to the tune, “Sterling,” it was Parley Pratt’s robust contribution to the body of hymns that inspired the Saints at the dedication of this building.

### **Readers Ten and Eleven: *Now Let Us Rejoice***

Reader Ten: The tune used for our next hymn has been a subject of debate over the years. The report of the dedication service in the March, 1836, *Messenger and Advocate* indicates that “Now Let Us Rejoice” was sung to the same tune as “The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning,” a tune referred to only as “Hosannah.” No tune by that name, with the correct meter, has ever been found. When “The Spirit of God” first appeared in the *Messenger and Advocate*<sup>10</sup> shortly before the dedication of the temple, the intended tune was evidently one associated with a patriotic poem, “The American Star.” Exactly what tune that might have been, and whether or not it was the same as the “Hosannah” tune used at the dedication, remains unclear.<sup>11</sup> Recent scholarship has suggested that the tune the early Saints called “Hosannah” was probably the same tune we continue to use today for “The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning.”<sup>12</sup> It is this tune to which “The Spirit of God” is set in the 1844 Little and Gardner hymnal, and, we believe, it is the tune to which we can also correctly sing “Now Let Us Rejoice.”

Reader Eleven: In her dissertation titled, “The Singing Saints,” Helen Macaré says this about the hymn, “Now Let Us Rejoice,” popularly referred to as “Home:”

**... this hymn must be read literally, bearing in mind that it was written at Zion, Jackson County, Missouri, and that it was printed [in *The Evening and the Morning Star*] just prior to the eruption of mob violence. ... This little but continuously expanding band, no longer strangers, had come home to Zion. ... They went about rejoicing (Gentiles called it bragging) about their new-found delight in being saints and were quite sure that the earth would be theirs when it was renewed to its Eden-like**

glory. . . The hymn also recognizes that days of trouble and scourging will come and immediately goes on to proclaim, “We’ll rise with the just when the Savior doth come.” At this period in his life, Phelps did not plan to rise with the just after he had been dead and long buried. He meant that Christ was coming, very soon; and that he himself need not fear and tremble. He was in Zion.<sup>13</sup>

### **Reader Twelve: *The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning***

It is fitting that we bring our experience to a close with a hymn that is dear to the heart of every Latter Day Saint—a hymn that grew out of the Pentecostal experiences here in Kirtland prior to the completion and dedication of the Temple. Tongues, visions, and prophecies were enjoyed on several occasions; in one particular quorum session, those attending reported “a great flow of the Holy Spirit. . . like fire in their bones, so that they could not hold their peace, but were constrained to cry hosanna to God and the Lamb. . .”<sup>14</sup> With his poetic gifts, W. W. Phelps formulated the words of a hymn that caught up the powerful spirit of this remarkable period. Immediately after its publication in *The Messenger and Advocate*,<sup>15</sup> the new hymn was printed as the last entry in Emma’s hymnal, which actually came off the presses only a few weeks before the Temple dedication in March.

Set to a stirring English tune, now called “Assembly” by the Utah church and “Paraclete” by the Community of Christ, the new hymn was sung at the dedication service by a large choir situated in the pews at all four corners of the Temple. Surely it was a moving and memorable moment for all who attended, for it is recorded that the benedictory prayer by Sidney Rigdon was “ended with loud acclamations of Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna to God and the Lamb, Amen, Amen, and Amen.”<sup>16</sup>

Now, following the prayer of benediction upon this service, the choir will begin this great hymn, and the assembly will join as directed.

### **Benediction**

*(It is suggested that the brief prayer of benediction end with the historic words, “Hosannah, Hosannah, Hosannah to God and the Lamb. Amen, Amen, and Amen.”)*

*(Richard Clothier, Lamoni, IA, Jan. 25, 2003)*

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Doctrine and Covenants 55.

<sup>2</sup>B. H. Roberts, ed, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 1:270.

<sup>3</sup>The six hymns were: “What Fair One is This” (Phelps); “Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken” (John Newton, adapted by Phelps); “The Time is Nigh, That Happy Time” (Parley Pratt); “Redeemer of Israel” (arranged by Phelps from Joseph Swain); “On Mountain Tops, the Mount of God” (Michael Bruce, adapted by Phelps); and “He Died! The Great Redeemer Died” (Isaac Watts, altered by Phelps). The Watts hymn was reassigned to the August 1832 issue in the Kirtland reprint of the paper.

<sup>4</sup>Michael Hicks, *Mormonism and Music* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 20.

<sup>5</sup>John Rippon, *A Selection of Hymns from the Best Authors* (London, England, 1787, hymn 128). The author of the text was listed only as “K,” although later reprints bear the name, “Keen,” presumably referring to Robert Keene, the choir director at Rippon’s church.

<sup>6</sup>*Messenger and Advocate*, 2:6 (March 1836), 274-281. See also Hicks, *ibid.*, 23.

<sup>7</sup>Earlier studies list this text as being authored by Phelps, but the present writer has found that stanzas 1 and 3 were actually adapted from stanzas 3 and 6 of Isaac Watts’ 1719 hymn, “Lord of the Worlds Above.”

<sup>8</sup>Lowell Mason, *The Boston Handel and Haydn Society Collection of Church Music*. (Boston MA, 1822).

<sup>9</sup>William Walker, *The Southern Harmony, and Musical Companion*. (New York: Hastings House, 1835).

<sup>10</sup>*The Messenger and Advocate*, 2:4 (January 1836), 256.

<sup>11</sup>Mary Poulter, *The First Ten Years of Latter Day Saint Hymnody: A Study of Emma Smith’s 1835 and Little and Gardner’s 1844 Hymnals*, Unpublished thesis, University of Massachusetts Lowell, 1995, p. 34. Additionally, the present writer has found “The American Star” associated with an Irish tune called “The Humours of Glen,” as well as

with a later tune by D. P. White published in 1844 in his tune collection, *The Sacred Harp* (Philadelphia: S. C. Collins).

<sup>12</sup>Hicks, *ibid.*, 23. See also Poulter, 33-34.

<sup>13</sup>Helen Hanks Macaré, *The Singing Saints: A Study of the Mormon Hymnal, 1835-1950*. Doctoral dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 1961, pp. 99-101.

<sup>14</sup>Roberts, 2:392.

<sup>15</sup>*Messenger and Advocate*, 2:4, 256

<sup>16</sup>*Messenger and Advocate* 2:6, 281.