

HYMNS OF THE REORGANIZATION A Celebration of 150 Years of Song

Note: The following hymns and readings come from a hymn festival created by Richard Clothier for the John Whitmer Historical Association Conference in Rockford, Illinois. The hymn festival commemorated the 150 year anniversary of Joseph Smith III's ordination as Prophet/President of the Community of Christ. The hymn festival was held on September 26, 2010 at the Community of Christ Chapel in Rockford, Illinois. Richard Clothier's hymn festival is an excellent resource for a wide range of Community of Christ gatherings from an annual reunion to a Wednesday evening prayer service. The festival is written for two narrators, but has the flexibility to include individual readers for each hymn if the one presiding over the hymn festival wishes.

Prelude

Welcome: It's my honor and pleasure this morning to welcome you to this special celebration of Heritage and of Song. Those of us from the John Whitmer Historical Association, who have been meeting in Rockford for our annual conference, want to express our deep appreciation to the Rockford Community of Christ congregation, and to pastor Alison Woods in particular, for your gracious hospitality in making this session possible.

Yesterday we traveled to the place where it all started—this “new organization” of the church (as it was called)—at Amboy. This morning, we culminate our conference that has focused on this year's Sesquicentennial of the Reorganization. We have talked a lot this week about what *happened* to the “Josephite” saints during these 150 years. This morning we will learn something of how they *felt* about what was happening, as expressed through the poetry they wrote, and the songs they sang.

We're going to attempt to provide a panorama of those 150 years through a brief look at each of the nine hymnals published by the Reorganization since 1860, and also by looking ahead to the tenth one, being compiled even as we speak, and scheduled for a debut in 2013.

Like all branches of Latter Day Saintism, the people of the Reorganization have always been a singing people. W. W. Blair records in his *Memoirs* that even before the actual organization under Joseph III, a conference held in Amboy in June, 1859, took action to provide for the publication of a hymnal “based upon the hymns published in a former edition, selected and compiled by Sister Emma, the wife of Joseph the Seer.” After Emma and Joseph formally affiliated with the movement on April 6, 1860, she was asked again. Action taken at the October, 1860, Conference referred to the Divine mandate given to her through her husband, and stated: “Sister Emma Smith Bidamon was appointed by a revelation in July, 1830 to make a collection of sacred hymns. . . she has therefore been re-appointed to the performance of this work.”

So it was that the first hymnal of the Reorganization was published in Cincinnati in 1861. As suggested by the conference action, it was patterned closely after the hymnal Emma compiled in 1841 in Nauvoo, with very few differences, in fact. That Nauvoo collection is the hymnal that scholars have noted seemed more “mainstream” in focus than the hymnal produced a year earlier in Manchester, England, by the Apostles who were laboring there at the time: Parley Pratt, John Taylor, and Brigham Young. Thus, while Emma's more mainstream Nauvoo hymnal became the basis for the hymnals of

the Reorganization, the hymnal compiled by the three Apostles in England went to Utah with them, and that is the collection from which the hymnals of the LDS church have descended.

Reader One: One of the hymns in Emma's hymnal that provided that "mainstream" flavor is the great English hymn, "All Hail the Power of Jesus Name." Written by Edward Perronet, a close friend of the Wesleys, it was no doubt one of the hymns sung by Emma during her Methodist upbringing. Let us sing it now, as we begin our journey through the hymns and hymnals of the Reorganization. We will sing only the first three stanzas, and we want to hear all the enthusiasm you can muster, especially on that wonderful passage for the men, for that is surely how Emma would have heard it in her own day.

Sing Hymn: *All Hail the Power of Jesus Name*, Hymns of the Saints #70 (st. 1,2,3) (from *The Latter Day Saints' Selection of Hymns*, 1861)

Hymn: *Unmoved by Fear*

Reader One: The second hymnal of the Reorganization was actually an expanded version of Emma's 1861 collection. Published in 1864, that enlarged edition added 37 hymns, including seven by David H. Smith, the youngest son of the prophet, born less than five months after his father's assassination.

Reader Two: The next two hymnals of the church (numbers 3 and 4) have an interesting story. On April 6, 1869, the annual Conference held in St. Louis took action to authorize work on a new hymnal, naming Joseph Smith to choose a committee for compilation. He chose Mark H. Forscutt and David H. Smith."

To say that the hymnal that resulted from this action was ambitious would be an understatement. Mark Forscutt had anticipated that he would be called upon to work on such a project, and had previously filled several notebooks with hymns, some of which he remembered from his native England, some from the time he had previously spent in Utah, and some which he composed himself. Thus, by the next year, 1870, Forscutt and the committee had produced the Reorganization's third hymnal, *The Saints' Harp*. It was an impressive collection of no less than 1,120 hymn texts, filling 792 4x6-inch pages. More than 2/3 of the texts in Emma's 1861 hymnal had been retained, and hundreds of texts from a variety of sources were added, including 88 new texts by Forscutt, 49 by David H. Smith, and 34 by Joseph Smith III.

Reader One: One of the texts written by Joseph III is a moving, personal expression of faith: "Unmoved by fear, my praise is due to thee, thou gracious God of saints." This hymn teaches us that true praise is not praise prompted by fear, but rather "taught" us by God's own all-encompassing love. Our only fear should be that we will not be worthy to walk beside our "noblest Friend." The prophet praises God for God's mercy and counsel, and ends with the simple prayer of faith, "On thee, my Savior, I depend." These are the expressions of one who, in spite of doubts and perhaps even some fears, had reluctantly made the decision to accept the challenge of the prophetic role left by the death of his father. It is an affirmation of the faith of a leader who would shape the "new organization" of the church for decades to come.

Sing Hymn: *Unmoved by Fear* (written by Joseph Smith III), *Hymns of the Saints* #131 (From *The Saints' Harp*, 1870)

Hymn: *Before the Morning's Joyous Light*

Reader Two: As if Mark Forscutt’s publication of 1,120 hymn texts were not enough, in 1871 the Conference held near Council Bluffs passed a resolution authorizing a new publication that would include *music* for the texts of *The Saints’ Harp*. Mark Forscutt was again appointed to head the work, but the monumental undertaking of assembling tunes and publishing musical notation for the first time progressed slowly, particularly since he was away on missionary trips much of the time. In 1887, significant Divine council given through Joseph III laid to rest questions about the place of music in the church with these words, “The service of song in the house of the Lord with humility and unity of Spirit in them that sing and them that hear is blessed, and acceptable with God.” The document also urged that those working on the hymnal project should “hasten their work in its time.” They did.

Thus, in 1889, *The Saints’ Harmony* was introduced to the church. This historic fourth hymnal of the Reorganization was a massive, unique work made up of split pages, with more than 700 tunes on the top half, and the entire 1,120 texts from the *Saints’ Harp* on the bottom. The preface reflects the pride of the committee that “about 450 compositions are published for the first time to the world, that 502 pieces are published for the first time in America, and that 393 of these are original contributions by our own composers.” Mark Forscutt had produced a book that was by far the largest collection of hymnody in the history of all Latter Day Saintism. We cannot help but be amazed by the statement in the preface that he had “contemplated a more extensive work.”

Reader One: Forty-nine of the hymn texts of the *Harp* and *Harmony* are from the pen of David Hyrum Smith, the last son of Emma and Joseph Smith, Jr. David spent his formative years in the stress and struggles of unsettling times in Nauvoo following his father’s martyrdom, and found solace in his pursuits of music, art, and poetry. He was loved and admired by the people of the Reorganization, who often referred to him as “the sweet singer of Israel.” Tragically, the great promise of this gifted young man’s life would never be fully realized, due to the gradual onset of mental instability.

Of the numerous poems written by this talented and charismatic young man, one in particular gives us an appreciation for his love of both nature and the gospel, and specifically, his linkage of these two driving forces in his life. The comparisons he makes between the brightness of the rising sun and the all-surpassing light of God illustrate the young author’s poetic and sensitive nature. He ends this prayer for the new day with the familiar and fitting phrase from the 30th Psalm, “Joy cometh in the morn.”

After its publication in *The Saints’ Harmony*, this hymn no longer appeared in the hymnals of the church, and has probably not been sung since. For our purposes this morning, it has been slightly revised and set to a lovely English tune called, “Repton.” After the piano introduces this hymn, the choir will let us hear it again by singing the first stanza, after which we will all join in singing the remainder of this tender hymn of praise and dedication.

Sing Hymn: *Before the Morning’s Joyous Light* (written by David Hyrum Smith), from *The Saints’ Harmony*, 1889

Hymn: *Blest Be Thou, O God of Israel*

Reader Two: It should not be surprising that Forscutt’s monumental *Saints’ Harmony* was not a success. Although it was a ground-breaking volume, it was much too large, too awkward to use, and too expensive for the average member, most of whom could not read music anyway. Thus, six years later, the Conference passed a resolution which dictated unusually detailed guidelines for a new, much smaller, less expensive, and more convenient collection, to contain hymns selected from the *Harmony*.

The resolution even named a committee to produce the new hymnal, which would become the Reorganization's 5th collection. Mark Forscutt's name was not among them.

Forscutt's life story is a fascinating one. As a young lad in his native England, he had gone with friends one day to heckle a group of Latter Day Saint missionaries, and ended up joining the church instead, whereupon his angry father disowned him. He traveled extensively preaching for his new church, and soon was persuaded to "gather" to "the promised land".

Reader One: Mark Forscutt and his new bride, Elizabeth, sailed for America in 1860, and joined the handcart brigade to Utah. Soon after his arrival, the talented Forscutt was chosen to be a secretary to Brigham Young. When he strongly resisted the pressure to practice polygamy, he was labeled an "apostate," and began to feel his life was in danger. He left the church and joined the Morrisite movement for a time, but eventually came in contact with the Reorganization. Forscutt soon became close friends with Joseph III, and went to work as an editor at the Herald Publishing House, which was now located in Lamoni, the church headquarters at the time.

Forscutt had been the ideal editor for the third and fourth hymnals of the church, since he was not only a talented writer, but also a self-taught musician. Among the numerous tunes he composed for the *Harmony*, several were retained in the new, smaller fifth hymnal, known as *The Saints' Hymnal*, published in 1895. One of these tunes, which he called "Norman," was paired in the 1895 hymnal with the text "Blest Be Thou, O God of Israel." It was Forscutt's testimony that this music came to him so clearly one evening that he actually went searching to see who might be playing it. He could find no one. He wrote out the tune as best he remembered it, believing it to be the very music of heaven itself.

Sing Hymn: *Blest Be Thou, O God of Israel* (written by Mark H. Forscutt), *Hymns of the Saints* #24 (from *The Saints' Hymnal*, 1895)

Hymn: Great and Marvelous

Reader Two: During the period at the turn of the century, the Sunday School movement had been spreading throughout the church, along with a "Religio Society" for youth. Responding to the urging of the General Sunday School Association, a committee was appointed to prepare, as a supplement to the 1895 *Saints' Hymnal*, a songbook that would be better suited to these activities. Thus, in 1903, a collection of 232 musical compositions, primarily lively assembly songs and gospel hymns, was published in Lamoni, under the name, *Zion's Praises*. It would be the 6th hymnal of the Reorganization.

This new hymnal quickly found acceptance, not only by the young, but by many older members as well. Many of the hymns were drawn from popular hymnals of the day, the product of authors and composers such as Fanny Crosby and Ira Sankey, and although most of these are today considered to be overly sentimental, a few, such as Charles Gabriel's "Great and Marvelous Are Thy Works," have survived as favorites in the current hymnal of Community of Christ.

Reader Two: The authorship of the hymn, "Great and Marvelous," is interesting. The tune is credited to Charles Gabriel, while the text is attributed to "Charlotte G. Homer." Actually, Gabriel wrote both the text and the tune. He wrote so many hymns that he decided to use a number of pen-names, and "Charlotte G. Homer" was one of them. As we sing this hymn, note the author's praise of the great Creator God of the Universe, the amazing God who is also infinitely concerned with each one of us. "Oh, how wonderful is thy power, and yet how tender is thy love."

Sing Hymn: *Great and Marvelous*, Hymns of the Saints #48 (from *Zion's Praises*, 1903)

Hymn: *There's an Old, Old Path*

Reader Two: If you have been keeping track, you will notice that at this point in the early 20th century, there were actually two hymnals in concurrent use in the Reorganization—the 1895 *Saints' Hymnal* and the 1903 *Zion's Praises*. So, it seemed logical that the two books should be replaced by a new hymnal which would combine the best selections from both. Thus was born the new *Saints' Hymnal* of 1933, the 7th hymnal of the Reorganization. This was the old dark blue (or purple) hymnal that many of today's older members grew up with.

In addition to the many gospel songs, a number of original hymns by members of the church had been published for the first time in *Zion's Praises*, and many of these were now carried over to the 1933 *Saints' Hymnal*. One such composition was a song by Vida Smith and Audentia Anderson that has become arguably the best-loved hymn of the Reorganization. It is known as “The Old, Old Path.” Audentia Anderson was a daughter of Joseph III and Bertha Madison Smith, and Vida Smith was her cousin. As members of the *Zion's Praises* committee, they collaborated on several hymns in addition to this one.

Reader One: Vida's narrative of the writing of “The Old, Old Path” is well known. One Sunday, as a morning worship service began at the Old Brick Church in Lamon, the minister read as his scripture the passage from Jeremiah which says, in part, “Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein.” Struck by these words, Vida immediately tuned out from the rest of the service, and, admiring the beauty outside of the window, began writing. She said she felt “the nearness of congenial friends,” and at home in the house of God. When the service was over, she had written a poem that eloquently expresses the treasure of close companionship with good friends and with the Master himself. She showed it to her musical cousin, Audentia, who proceeded to compose the tune for this beloved hymn. Let us sing it now in the spirit in which it was written, and with all the four-part harmony we can muster.

Sing Hymn: *The Old, Old Path* (written by Vida E. Smith), Hymns of the Saints #158 (from *The Saints' Hymnal*, 1933)

Hymn: *Send Forth Thy Light, O Zion*

Reader Two: In 1943, President F. M. Smith felt the need to upgrade the music of the church, and moved to bring to Independence a talented musician from Michigan, who would become the church's first full-time director of music. Franklyn Weddle proceeded to greatly elevate the quality of music in the church on every level, from radio broadcasts, to headquarters activities and facilities, to aids for local musicians, and new hymn publications. One of his major goals in improving the church's music was the compilation and publication in 1956 of a new hymnal, known simply as *The Hymnal* (“the grey hymnal”, as it was often called). A high standard of musical, poetic, and theological integrity was maintained in the selection process for this 8th hymnal of the Reorganization. As a result, a number of “old favorites” were judged to fall short of this standard, and were not retained.

Reader One: One of the most prolific contributors of new hymns to the “grey” hymnal was the legendary Graceland College professor and minister, Roy A. Cheville. In the act of planning the worship services for the college congregation, Cheville was often unable to find a hymn that was “just

right” for a particular service, so he frequently simply sat down and wrote one himself. Thus, this talented and influential minister was responsible for no less than 18 hymns in this 1956 hymnal, many of them expressing important concepts that challenged the church to grow in understanding. One example of this is the hymn, “Send Forth Thy Light, O Zion.”

In this hymn, Zion is seen not as a particular location to which the Saints would gather for safely, but rather as an ensign or beacon, out of which light, love, and life would go out to all the world. As we sing this hymn now, let’s try to reflect “Doc” Cheville’s well-known strong, enthusiastic manner of singing, and worshipping.

Sing Hymn: *Send Forth Thy Light, O Zion* (written by Roy Cheville) Hymns of the Saints #317 (from *The Hymnal*, 1956)

Hymn: *Let Us Give Praise to the God of Creation*

Reader One: Due to health concerns, in 1969 Franklyn Weddle passed the baton, literally, to Harold Neal, who had been serving on the Graceland College music faculty. Two years later, an exhaustive 10-year process was initiated that would lead to the publication of the current hymnal of the church, number 9 in the sequence, *Hymns of the Saints*. The large and diverse committee that compiled this volume made a conscious attempt to enlarge the variety of music styles, adopt the concept of inclusive language, and update theological concepts whenever possible. The result has been acclaimed by hymnal experts from numerous denominations.

Reader Two: One of the committee members for *Hymns of the Saints* discovered a latent talent for hymn-writing, and was therefore able to make valuable contributions of compositions when a particular need was discovered. Geoffrey Spencer, a native of Australia, served the church in many roles during his lifetime, among them the post of president of the Council of Twelve Apostles. One of his eleven hymns in *Hymns of the Saints* is notable for the efforts made by the author to respond to questions about “what the church believes today” by encapsulating in a few verses what he felt to be the essence of Restoration theology.

Eleven foundational principles are thus incorporated into the five verses of the hymn, “Let Us Give Praise to the God of Creation.” (He said other concepts pressed for inclusion, but the hymn was long enough already!) These include: in the 1st stanza, the concept of Restoration; in the 2nd, the worth of all persons, the living presence of divine power for the task, and the stewardship of the earth; in the 3rd stanza, the sacredness of all things, and the unity of spirit and element; in the 4th, the ongoing search for truth, men and women together in ministry, and the role of the church as sin-bearer; and in the 5th stanza, the power of our heritage, and the experience of the God who calls us into the future.

Sing Hymn: *Let Us Give Praise to the God* (written by Geoff Spencer) Hymns of the Saints #398 (from *Hymns of the Saints*, 1981)

Closing Prayer Hymn: *God, Whose Grace Redeems Our Story*

One Presiding (who led the welcome): Almost literally as we speak, a headquarters committee is hard at work on the next hymnal for Community of Christ, our 10th hymnal, to be introduced at the next World Conference, in 2013.

While final decisions are not yet made, even as to its name, the collection will include more than 700 hymns in a wide variety of styles, including for the first time a significant number of indigenous songs of the various countries where the church has a presence. New texts and tunes have been contributed by the membership, and a large number of fresh new hymns from other denominations have appeared during the now 29 years since the publication of *Hymns of the Saints*.

One of the new hymns that we hope will be included in the 2013 hymnal is a text by Barbara Howard. This hymn seems most appropriate to sum up not only our meeting this morning, but indeed, our entire weekend. It is a prayer hymn that artfully affirms God's presence in our past (stanza one), our present (stanza two), and our hope for the future (stanza three). And, undergirding all the chapters of our lives is the fervent prayer that God's Spirit will continue to work within us "to transform our lives anew." It is a good hymn for a 150th anniversary!

Sing Hymn: *God, Whose Grace Redeems Our Story* (written by Barbara Howard) For the 2013 Hymnal (unnamed)

Postlude