

A HISTORY OF LATTER-DAY SAINT HYMNBOOKS

THE SONG OF THE SAINTS



SAMPLE EDITION

Introduction + Chapter One

MICHAEL D. YOUNG

Explore the history, faith, and music preserved in the hymnbooks of the Saints

Introduction

Using music to praise God is not new. Every one of the standard works is full of references to music that praises God. According to the Old Testament, music was part of our lives even before we came to earth. In the pre-mortal life, “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy¹.”

Several instances to singing occur in *The Book of Mormon*. Near the beginning of 1 Nephi, he records his father’s remarkable vision. “And being thus overcome with the Spirit, he was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God².”

King Benjamin speaks about music being in heaven, and specifically choirs, as he is realizing that he is facing the end of his life. “I say unto you that I have caused that ye should assemble yourselves together that I might arid my garments of your blood, at this period of time when I am about to go down to my grave, that I might go down in peace, and my immortal spirit may join the choirs above in singing the praises of a just God³.”

Another example comes from the Book of Alma when he is preaching. “And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now⁴?” Here, he compares the joy of being redeemed by Jesus Christ to a song.

Mormon underscores this idea as well of singing in heavenly choirs after this life. “And he hath brought to pass the redemption of the world, whereby he that is found guiltless before him

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at the judgment day hath it given unto him to dwell in the presence of God in his kingdom, to sing ceaseless praises with the choirs above, unto the Father, and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Ghost, which are one God, in a state of happiness which hath no end⁵.

Other instances of praising God come through the *Holy Bible*, one of the most obvious being the angelic choirs that sang to announce the birth of Jesus Christ. “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men⁶.

Near the end of the Savior’s life, during the Last Supper, Jesus took time to sing with his disciples just before he went to the Garden of Gethsemane to offer his great intercessory prayer. “And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives⁷.”

Later in the *New Testament*, Paul promoted the use of hymns and spiritual songs, both to the Ephesians ⁸and the Colossians. He wrote, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord⁹.”

In the *Old Testament*, the entire book of “Psalms” is devoted to sacred songs that praise the Lord. “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing¹⁰.” We also hear of the great power that King David’s music had on the troubled spirit of King Saul.

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The Song of the Saints – Young

In the *Doctrine and Covenants*, Brigham Young counseled the Saints who are crossing the plains toward the Salt Lake Valley: “If thou art merry, praise the Lord with singing, with music, with dancing, and with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving¹¹.”

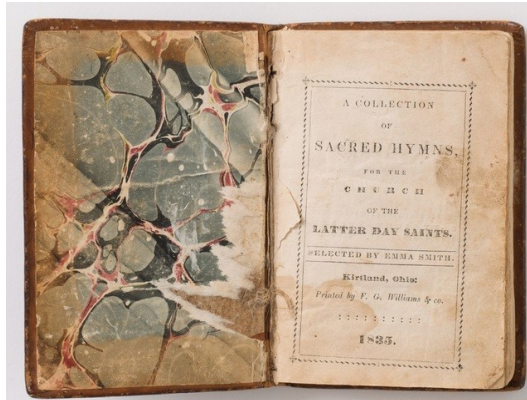
Though these are not all the examples of how music is used in the standard works, they provide insight that spiritual music has always been a part of Christ’s church, and so it makes sense that it would be a part of the Restoration.

In this volume, we will follow the progression of the hymnbook and the children’s songbook throughout the church’s history, starting with the first efforts by Emma Smith and W.W. Phelps, up to the new hymnbook and children’s songbook announced by President Russell M. Nelson in the summer of 2018. As the membership of the Church has grown and changed over the years, so the music of the Church has evolved, and will likely continue to do so well into the future. Regardless of the actual words and notes used in worship, the faithful sentiment of worshiping God and His Son remains the same and is a thread that connects us today with the early Saints who first sang the hymns of the Restoration.

It is my hope that you will find a great appreciation for the hymns and children’s songs, and a deeper understanding of their history. I also want to foster appreciation for the dedicated brothers and sisters who have consecrated their musical and lyrical talents to build God’s kingdom on earth. Though some were well educated and accomplished in their fields, others were simple members of the church with powerful testimonies that they desired to share.

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Chapter 1: Early Latter-day Saint Hymnbooks



About the Book

A Collection of Sacred Hymns, for the Church of the Latter Day Saints

First Published: 1836

Subsequent Editions Published: 21

Compiled By: Emma Smith and W.W. Phelps

Number of Hymns: 90

Size: 3" x 4.5"

To understand where music in the Church is headed, we need to understand where it has been, and to that end, we should start at the very first efforts to create a canon of hymns of the Restoration. To do this, you may need to start with a blank slate of how you imagine a hymnbook.

Someone picking up a copy of the first Latter-day Saint hymnbook might not recognize it as a “hymnal”. The book was tiny by today’s standards, both in its dimensions and in the number of hymns it contained. It was meant to be a “vest pocket hymnal” and so was only three inches by four and a half inches. Furthermore, though it is called a hymnbook, the entire book consisted of only hymn texts, without a single musical setting to be found.

According to one scholar, these pocket hymnals served more than one purpose. “While many believe the children learned to read from the Bible, the truth of the matter is that children learned

to read from their pocket hymnals! When mother or father took a break from work, they would pull them out of a pocket and the children would be set reading aloud the poetry¹².”

The common practice of the time was simply to sing the texts to common hymn and folk tunes that were well-known in congregations. Different tunes could be selected for the same text, depending on the preferences of those singing, and the meter of the piece. This practice still occasionally continues today, as the 1985 hymnbook contains a section highlighting the hymns’ meters, which are the number of syllables in each line of the text. Hymns with the same meter can be sung interchangeably with their tunes.

For example, in the 1985 hymnbook, the words to “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee” and “Sweet is the Peace the Gospel Brings” can be sung interchangeably, because both songs have the same number of syllables per line.

Music in the Early 1800s

It is also important to understand the state of music in the early 1800s and the circumstances in which the first LDS hymnbook was compiled. Compared to their European counterparts, Americans still had a long way to go musically. One scholar described the situation. “In 1830 when the Church was established, music in the United States was in its swaddling clothes. There were no public recitals, no philharmonic societies, no operas, no chamber music recitals, and no music publishing societies¹³.”

Western music had flourished in Europe for centuries. In 1830, the United States was only 54 years old, and between the War of Independence and other hardships of growing a new nation, most people simply struggled to make a living. Organized, formal music like many Europeans enjoyed had simply not developed in the United States.

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Music was very much a matter of tradition and community. People shared songs and tunes with each other, and people sang for entertainment and at various social gatherings, but there were not many formal opportunities to sing.

While formal opportunities were not as prevalent, this did not mean that no singing happened. “There was a flourishing tradition of Sacred Harp music in the United States, as evidenced by the dozens of shape-note hymnals published in the early 19th century: The Missouri Harmony, the Southern Harmony, Wyeth’s Repository, and on and on. Hymn singing was one of the few forms of recreation in those days, and they were very good at it¹⁴.”

Shape note singing, also called “Sacred Harp” singing, consisted of songbooks that had notes in different shapes to help singers identify them.



There were many of these shape-note hymnals in existence in the 19th Century, and people used them at social gatherings, singing hymns even outside church services. The singing master might be the only one in the group who had a hymnal, and he would teach the others the basics of singing from the book¹⁶.

The singers would divide up into their voice parts, soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, forming a square. The conductor then stood in the middle, facing the tenors. A different voice part formed

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each side of the “hollow square”, which allowed people singing the same part to more easily support each other. The singers were singing to each other, and not to a typical audience as many choral performances are today¹⁷. The following is an example of shape note music with three different parts. This traditional tune was the tune the hymn “Praise to the Man” was originally sung to.

16 STAR IN THE EAST 10, 11. Baptist Harmony, p. 35

Hail the blest morn, see the great Mediator, Down from the regions of glory descend! } Chorus. Brightest and best of the sons of the morning!
 Shepherds, go worship the babe in the manger, Lo, for his guard the bright angels attend.

Dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid; Star in the east, the ho - ri - son a - dorn - ing, Guide where our infant Re - deemer was laid.

2 Cold on his cradle the dew-drops are shining;
 Low lies his bed, with the beasts of the stall;
 Angels adore him, in slumbers reclining,
 While men and shepherds before him do fall.
 Brightest and best, &c.

3 Say, shall we yield him, in costly devotion,
 Odours of Eden, and offerings divine,
 Gems from the mountain, and pearls from the ocean,
 Myrrh from the forest, and gold from the mine?
 Brightest and best, &c.

4 Vainly we offer each ample oblation,
 Vainly with gold we his favour secure,
 Richer by far is the heart's adoration:
 Dearest to God are the prayers of the poor
 Brightest and best, &c.

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16 STAR IN THE EAST 10, 11. Baptist Harmony, p. 35

Hail the blest morn, see the great Mediator, Down from the regions of glory descend! } Chorus. Brightest and best of the sons of the morning!
 Shepherds, go worship the babe in the manger, Lo, for his guard the bright angels attend.

Dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid; Star in the east, the ho - ri - son a - dorn - ing, Guide where our infant Re - deemer was laid.

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 Myrrh from the forest, and gold from the mine?
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 Dearest to God are the prayers of the poor
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The First Hymns of the Restoration

The first latter-day hymns were written before the “Church of Christ”, as it was called, had a formal hymnbook. William Wines Phelps, also known as W.W. Phelps, published the first hymns of the restoration two years after the formation of the Church, in 1832. They appeared twice a month in Independence, Missouri in the church’s newspaper *The Evening and the Morning Star*.

Most of the lyrics were written by Phelps himself, but, in some cases, he took existing Protestant hymns and edited them to have a more “latter-day” feel. Joseph Smith himself was known to call this practice “correcting” these hymns, rather than simply adapting them. (Quote) The very first text Phelps published in June 1832 was titled “What Fair One is This?” Looking at a few verses of this text, you can see the tone of the language is much different from hymns in more recent collections:

Hymns,
*Selected and prepared for the Church of Christ, in these last
days.*

WHAT fair one is this, in the wilderness trav'ling,
Looking for Christ, the belov'd of her heart!
O this is the Church, the fair bride of the Savior,
Which with every idol is willing to part.
While men in contention, are constantly howling,
And Babylon's bells are continually toiling,
As though all the craft of her merchants was failing,
And Jesus was coming to reign on the earth.

There is a sweet sound in the gospel of heaven,
And people are joyful when they understand;
The saints on their way home to glory, are even
Determin'd, by goodness, to reach the blest land.
Old formal professors are crying “delusion,”
And high-minded hypocrites say, “’tis confusion,”
While grace is pour'd out in a blessed effusion,
And saints are rejoicing to see priest-craft fall.

A blessing, a blessing, the Savior is coming,
As prophets and pilgrims of old have declar'd;
And Israel, the favor'd of God, is beginning
To come to the feast for the righteous prepar'd.
In the desert are fountains continually springing,
The heavenly music of Zion is ringing;
The saints all their tithes and offerings are bringing:
They thus prove the Lord and his blessing receive.

The name of Jehovah is worthy of praising,
And so is the Savior an excellent theme:
The Elders of Israel a standard are raising,
And call on all nations to come to the same:
These Elders go forth and the gospel are preaching,
And all that will hear them, they freely are teaching,
And thus is the vision of Daniel fulfilling:
The Stone of the mountain will soon fill the earth.

The Song of the Saints – Young

This text was later included in the 1835 hymnbook, along with many other of Phelps's original and "corrected" texts. Phelps also included some of the texts that would eventually be published in the hymnbook in another church newspaper known as *The Messenger and Advocate*. When mobs destroyed his printing press in Independence, Missouri, Phelps moved his printing operations back to Kirtland, Ohio, where he started to print *The Messenger and the Advocate*.

When the hymns from these two papers appeared in the new hymnbook, they appeared in almost the exact order as they had appeared in the papers.

Other Adapted Texts

Many of the hymns that Phelps adapted were already well known throughout Christian religions, both then and now. One example that stands out is how Phelps changes some words in the classic Christmas hymn "Joy to the World." This was an especially bold move, as the original text to this hymn was written by Isaac Watts, who is widely considered to be one of the most famous Christian hymn writers of all time. In addition to "Joy to the World", Watts is known for such beloved hymns as "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross", "My Shepherd Will Supply My Need", and "Our God, Our Help in Ages Past."

The changes that Phelps made shifted the focus from the first coming of the Savior to His Second Coming. He altered many of the verbs from the present tense to the future tense, such as changing "the Lord is come" from the original to "the Lord will come" in his version. The Second Coming was a common topic among early Latter-day Saints hymns. Compare the original words to the Phelps words for a good example of how he adapted hymn texts.

The Song of the Saints – Young

Isaac Watts' Original Version

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the world, the Saviour reigns!
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and
plains
Repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love.

W.W. Phelps's Adapted Version

Joy to the world, the Lord will come!
And earth receive her King;
Let ev'ry heart prepare him room,
And saints and angels sing.

Rejoice! rejoice! when Jesus reigns!
And saints their songs employ:
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and
plains,
Repeat the sounding joy.

No more will sin and sorrow grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He'll come and make the blessings flow
Far as the curse was found.

Rejoice! rejoice! in the Most High,
While Israel spreads abroad,
Like stars that glitter in the sky,
And ever worship God.

The version that was published in the 1985 hymnbook is mostly Phelps's version, though this version returns Watt's first two lines to his original words.

Another well-known adaptation was the words to "Redeemer of Israel." This hymn was based on the poem "Oh Thou in Whose Presence My Soul Takes Delight", which was written by Joseph Swain. Compare the original poem to Phelps's adaptation and you can see how he paired the original source material with his new understanding of the latter-day gospel. Note that this original version of "Redeemer of Israel" differs slightly from the version that appeared in the 1985 hymnbook. The original fifth verse was later omitted and more of Swain's original poem was added back in as verse six in subsequent versions.

Oh Thou in Whose Presence

Joseph Swain, 1791

O Thou in whose presence my soul takes delight,
On whom in affliction I call;
My comfort by day and my song in the night,
My hope, my salvation, my all.

Where dost Thou, dear Shepherd, resort with Thy sheep
To feed them in pastures of love?
Say, why in the valley of death should I weep,
Or alone in this wilderness rove?

He looks, and ten thousand of angels rejoice,
And myriads now wait for His word;
He speaks, and eternity, filled with His voice,
Re-echoes the praise of the Lord.

Dear Shepherd, I hear, and will follow Thy call,
I know the sweet sound of Thy voice;
Protect and defend me, for Thou art my all,
And in Thee I will ever rejoice¹⁹.

Redeemer of Israel, Original Version
(Italics added for emphasis)

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1. Redeemer of Israel,
Our only delight,
On whom for a blessing we call,
Our shadow by day
And our pillar by night,
Our King, our companion, our all!

2. We know he is coming
To gather his sheep
And plant them in Zion in love,
For why in the valley
Of death should they weep
Or alone in the wilderness rove?

3. How long we have wandered
As strangers in sin
And cried in the desert for thee!
Our foes have rejoiced

¹⁹ See https://library.timelesstruths.org/music/O_Thou_in_Whose_Presence/

When our sorrows they've seen,
But Israel will shortly be free.

4. As children of Zion,
Good tidings for us.
The tokens already appear.
Fear not, and be just,
For the kingdom is ours.
The hour of redemption is near.

5. The secret of Heaven
The mystery below,
That many have sought for so long,
We know that we know,
For the spirit of Christ,
Tells his servants they cannot be wrong²⁰.

Redeemer of Israel, Phelps's Version

1. Redeemer of Israel,
Our only delight,
On whom for a blessing we call,
Our shadow by day
And our pillar by night,
Our King, our Deliv'rer, our all!

2. We know he is coming
To gather his sheep
And lead them to Zion in love,
For why in the valley
Of death should they weep
Or in the lone wilderness rove?

3. How long we have wandered
As strangers in sin
And cried in the desert for thee!
Our foes have rejoiced
When our sorrows they've seen,
But Israel will shortly be free.

4. As children of Zion,
Good tidings for us.

²⁰ See

<http://www.kimballlarsen.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/FirstPrintingEveningAndMorningStar.png>

The tokens already appear.
Fear not, and be just,
For the kingdom is ours.
The hour of redemption is near.

5. Restore, my dear Savior,
The light of thy face;
Thy soul-cheering comfort impart;
And let the sweet longing
For thy holy place
Bring hope to my desolate heart.

6. He looks! and ten thousands
Of angels rejoice,
And myriads wait for his word;
He speaks! and eternity,
Filled with his voice,
Re-echoes the praise of the Lord²¹.

Emma Smith's Commandment

Three years after his marriage to Emma Hale, in July 1830, Joseph Smith received a revelation that is now recorded in the twenty-fifth section of the Doctrine and Covenants. Among other things, it told Emma Smith that "...thou art an elect lady, whom I have called²²..." and gave her a commandment concerning what would become the first Latter-day Saint hymnbook. The following words were addressed to Emma:

"And it shall be given thee, also, to make a selection of sacred hymns, as it shall be given thee, which is pleasing unto me, to be had in my church. For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads²³."

Emma was particularly suited to such a task of compiling a hymnbook as her life's experiences had prepared her. "Most historians believe that Emma had been the music leader in

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the frontier church her father had established and ran; hence she would have been very familiar with many hymns and many hymn tunes²⁴.”

It may seem strange today how much emphasis the Church puts on sacred music. There were many people in Joseph and Emma’s time thought that singing in itself was sinful, especially religious singing. There were entire denominations historically, such as some Quakers and Puritans, who resisted singing or playing instruments as a form of worship.

Among those congregations that did sing, common practices might have looked quite different from those used today in church meetings—especially in the Protestant tradition, there was often a music leader who sang a few lines of a hymn, after which the congregation sung back those lines together. The music leader continued with the next lines until the entire hymn was sung.

The process was known as “lining out”, of the “old way” of singing and was a popular way to teach new hymns to a congregation. This style was often preferable, because many people did not own their own hymnbook, or sometimes they would be asked to sing songs that did not appear in their hymnbook.

Others preferred “regular singing”, which is similar to what most congregations do today where the entire congregation sings continuously from the beginning to end. This style of singing, however, was only an option if everyone had access to a hymnbook²⁵.

The members of the new, restored church came from a variety of religious and musical traditions and so the question of what role music would play in the new church would surely have been on their minds. The revelation to Emma Smith left no doubt as to the central role that music would have in latter-day worship, as a form a prayer that was pleasing before the Lord.

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Though the revelation was given in 1830, it was not until 1835 that the work on the hymnbook began in earnest. In September of 1835, the High Council and Presidency in Kirtland, Ohio counseled Emma to work on the collection of hymns in conjunction with Brother Phelps.

They recorded, “Sept 14th, 1835, It was further decided that Sister Emma Smith proceed to make a selection of Sacred Hymns, according to the revelation; and that President W.W. Phelps be appointed to revise and arrange them for printing²⁶.”

Many years later, an explanation about why it took so long to bring this hymnbook project to light was given in one of the Church’s magazines, called *Improvement Era*:

“We have neglected to impress upon the minds of this generation how diligently she [Emma Smith] fulfilled this divine mission to which she was called. If Emma had been a woman of leisure she could have complied with the request in a short time. She was, however, very particular in the care of her family, being a housekeeper of immaculate cleanliness and allowing no outside duty to interfere with her devotion to her children and husband²⁷.”

Another roadblock among a part of the population may have simply been some of religious attitudes of the day, with many people firmly in the camp that mixing religion and music was a sinful practice. Though hymn singing flourished in some denominations, others rejected it completely. According to one scholar, “It is easy for us to realize the difficulty involved in collecting hymns in those days, especially when we consider the conditions that prevailed among the various religious philosophies of more than a century ago. In those days, the narrow-minded, straight-laced protestant religions thought music in almost any form to be blasphemy, claiming it to be of the Devil²⁸.”

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Emma was to make the selection of hymns to be included in the collection and Brother Phelps was tasked with revising them and getting them ready to print.

In grouping their hymns, they used sections that were common for Protestant hymnbooks of the time, such as sections for “Farewell Hymns” that were sung when people were leaving to go proselyte. They also included sections such as “Morning Hymns,” and “Evening Hymns”, which were meant to be hymns that were sung with families in the home and not necessarily at church meetings. Thus, the hymn book contained exactly six of each of these hymns, which would allow you to sing one for each day of the week, except for Sunday, when you would be in church²⁹.

The First Printing

Though the title page of the hymnal bears the date 1835, the actual first printing of Emma’s hymnbook did not go into circulation until 1836.

The preface to the hymnal describes the purpose of the volume:

In order to sing by the Spirit, and with the understanding, it is necessary that the church of the Latter Day Saints should have a collection of “Sacred Hymns” adapted to their faith and belief in the gospel, and, as far as can be, holding forth the promises made to the fathers who died in the precious faith of a glorious resurrection, and a thousand years’ reign on earth with the Son of Man in his glory.

Notwithstanding the church, as it were, is in its infancy, yet, as the song of the righteous is a prayer unto God, it is sincerely hoped that the following collection, selected with an eye single to his glory, may answer every purpose till more are composed, or till we are blessed with a copious variety of the songs of Zion³⁰.

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The book was tiny by today's standards, only three inches wide and four and a half inches tall. The reason was that it was printed in what is known as "sexadecimal form", which was a format that cost the least amount of money to print. The church was only about five years old and did not have great financial resources.

The printing process is described like this, "Sixteen pages were printed on both sides of a single sheet, which was then folded, cut, and sewn into the leather binding³¹."

This meant that you could print the entire book on just four large sheets of paper. The first print run is thought to have been quite limited, with likely only about 500 copies. Today, not even a dozen copies are still known to be in existence, and they have become valuable collector's items. For example, in 2006, one of these original 1835 hymnbooks was sold at an auction in New York City for \$273,600³².

A second, widely expanded edition of Sister Emma's hymnal appeared in 1841, which contained 304 hymns. It was printed in Nauvoo, but soon persecution and the Saints' eventual exodus to the Salt Lake Valley, caused most formal musical efforts to be put on hold.

Emma Smith continued her efforts to produce hymnals throughout the remainder of her life. After the Saints went west, she assisted the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (RLDS) in publishing several hymnals.

The Bellows Falls Hymnbook and Other Unofficial Early Hymnbooks

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The Song of the Saints – Young



A Collection of Sacred Hymns, for the Use of the Latter Day Saints

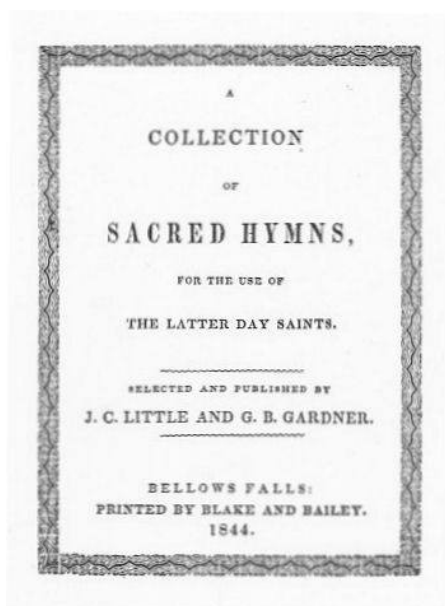
First Published: 1844

Subsequent Editions Published: 0

Compiled By: George B. Gardner and Jesse C. Little

Number of Hymns: 48

Size: 4.5" x 5.5"



The first Latter-day Saint hymnbook to include musical notes was a small, unofficial hymnbook published in 1844. It was known as the *Bellows Falls Hymnbook* after the town in Vermont in which it was published by George Bryant Gardner and Jesse Carter Little. Its official title was *A Collection of Sacred Hymns for the Use of Latter-Day Saints*.

The Song of the Saints – Young

Eighteen of the ninety hymns from Emma's hymnbook were included with printed tunes and seventeen more were included without music. This marks the first time "The Spirit of God" was published with musical notation.

The process of creating musical notation with a printing press was an extremely complicated process that often produced sloppy results. It was easy to make layout errors and difficult to place syllables and notes together exactly so that they matched.

Before joining the church, George B. Gardner was a chorister at a Methodist church. He went on to travel with the Saints to Salt Lake and helped build the Salt Lake Temple.

At the time, Jesse C. Little was the Branch President of Peterborough, New Hampshire, Branch of the church. Brother Little would eventually be in the first pioneer company to reach the Salt Lake Valley.

This hymnbook was only supposed to serve as a temporary measure until a second edition of Emma's official hymnbook could be printed and distributed. At the time, Hyrum Smith at the time had told Parley P. Pratt that any church materials, including hymnbooks, should be approved by the Prophet Joseph Smith in order to make sure they were sending the right message. This hymnbook's temporary nature seems to have exempted it from being reviewed. This is only one of several unofficial hymnals that were created to meet the immediate needs of specific congregations.

Not only did the *Bellow Falls Hymnbook* include music, but there are two pages at the beginning of the hymnal that are meant to serve as musical instruction, under the heading "Scales, Signatures, Notes, and Rests." These provided examples of the musical notation to be used in the rest of the book. Only two voice parts were included with the texts, one in the treble

clef (the soprano part) and one in the bass clef (the bass part). It is possible that other people might have improvised the alto and tenor parts based on what was already in the hymnbook.

It is likely that the authors used another similar hymnbook on which to pattern their hymnbook. One such hymnbook was the *Christian Lyre* by Joshua Leavitt, which had been published in 1830. These two books share a similar format and some of the same hymn tunes. They both only have two musical lines, which Mr. Leavitt explains was done for simplicity's sake, so that the book could be more easily used by anyone and not only the musically trained.

According to Marilyn J. Crandall, “Mistakes aside, the Little and Gardner hymnal admirably reflects mainstream Mormonism. Both compilers were true believers, suffered much and sacrificed greatly to establish Zion, and died as members in good standing. Their reason for creating the hymnal was simple; they desired to give local converts, undoubtedly friends and acquaintances, access to the hymns of Zion in order to realize the power of worship through music³³.”

Another example of these unofficial hymnals was a text-only hymnal printed in Boston in 1843 by John Hardy. John Cairns and Apostle John E. Page also published a text-only hymnbook in March 1841 with forty-seven hymns, some of which are unique to that book. They stated in the preface of the hymnbook that they were creating this edition “...to answer the present demand...” for hymnbooks in and around Nauvoo³⁴. A year after the *Bellow Falls Hymnbook*, in 1845, a Latter-day Saint missionary and music teacher named Charles A. Adams published another small, unofficial hymnbook, also in Bellows Falls. This hymnal groups songs in various categories, including “Miscellaneous”, “Mission of the Twelve”, “On Faith”, “Joseph Smith”, and “Written in Prison³⁵.”

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The Spirit of God

Many of those early hymns would enjoy considerable longevity in the church, especially those that held special significance for church history. In fact, twenty-six of the ninety hymn texts included in the first hymnal can still be found in the 1985 edition.

One such hymn that illustrates this is “The Spirit of God” The Spirit of God played a role in the dedication of the first latter-day temple in Kirtland, Ohio.

W.W. Phelps wrote the hymn “The Spirit of God.” It was originally printed under the title “The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning”. It was a last-minute addition to the original hymnal and so appears as the final text. Brother Phelps wrote the hymn for the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, which occurred on March 27, 1836, only about a month after the first printing of the hymnal appeared. This meant that the hymn had been sung at the Latter-day Saint meetings before the temple dedication, but it was the dedication that brought the song to prominence. It is still sung as part of the dedicatory services for temples to this day.

This text was paired with various hymn tunes, including “American Star” and “Hosanna”, which is the tune to which it was sung at the temple dedication, and the one to which it is sung today. It is interesting to note, however, that the lyrics to “The Spirit of God” draw somewhat from the lyrics to “American Star”, which was Phelps’s original tune. The song was a rousing patriotic American anthem, which Phelps adapted to be an anthem about Zion.

For example, one line of “American Star” says, “to speed the glad tidings of liberty far,” while in the same place in the “The Spirit of God”, it says “to spread forth the kingdom of heaven abroad.” The first line of one of the verses of “American Star” is “The spirits of Washington, Warren, Montgomery...” which starts off with the same few words as the first verse of “The Spirit of God.”

The Song of the Saints – Young

The Spirit of God originally had six stanzas, though only four were kept for most subsequent versions of the hymnbook, including the 1985 version.

The original fourth verse specifically mentions some of the ordinances performed in the Kirtland temple, such as washings and anointings, and also talks about the parable of the laborers in the vineyard as told by Jesus and recorded in Matthew 20:1-16.

We'll wash and be wash'd, and with oil be anointed
Withal not omitting the washing of feet:
For he that receiveth his PENNY appointed,
Must surely be clean at the harvest of wheat.

The fifth stanza is also not often sung and has reference to the children of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness as recorded in the Old Testament.

Old Israel that fled from the world for his freedom,
Must come with the cloud and the pillar, amain:
A Moses, and Aaron, and Joshua lead him,
And feed him on manna from heaven again.

Adam-ondi-Ahman

One of the most beloved LDS hymns of the time was W.W. Phelps's hymn either known as "The Earth was Once a Garden Place" or "Adam-ondi-Ahman". Adam-ondi-Ahman is the place Joseph Smith revealed in Sections 78 and 116 of the Doctrine and Covenants as being the site where Adam and Eve lived after being cast out of the garden of Eden, and the site of a future gathering of the faithful with the Savior before His Second Coming. This hymn was sung at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, and when a stake was organized in Adam-ondi-Ahman in June of 1838. It has been included in many hymnbooks since, including the 1985 edition³⁶.

Conclusion

Though much different from Latter-day Saint hymnbooks that would follow, Emma and William's hymnbook established sacred music as a pillar of worship for the church that laid the

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foundation of all that would come after. Their hymns reflected the hopeful, optimistic attitude of the time, especially looking forward to the Savior's Second Coming. Many of the traditional songs established in the first hymnbook have lasted year after year to bless generations of those who call themselves Latter-day Saints.

Though this first hymnbook was small, both in terms of its size and its overall content, it continues to shape church music today. The original hymnbook established several important precedents, including that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints would have its own unique music, but that it would also borrow, and sometimes adapt, beloved hymns from other denominations. It confirmed the notion that it was not sinful to praise the Lord through singing and that singing was not only pleasing to God, but could be considered a prayer unto him.

The book itself stood out from among many other Christian hymnals of its day as being especially optimistic and joyful.

“In contrast to the music generally used by the churches of that day, the Mormon-produced hymns were as light to darkness, and of brightness to gloom. All the old expressions of fear and sorrow, the terrible confessions and lamentations over sin, the constant dwelling upon the sufferings of the Crucified Savior, and the eternal tortures in store for sinners, give place in the songs of the Mormon church to expressions of hope, joy and the sense of sins forgiven. More emphasis is placed upon His love and glorious conquest than upon His earthly sufferings³⁷.”

Though different from Latter-day Saint hymnbooks that would follow, Emma and William's hymnbook established sacred music as a pillar of worship for the Church, laying the foundation of all hymns that would follow. Their hymns reflected the hopeful, optimistic attitude of the time, especially looking forward to the Savior's Second Coming. Many of the songs published in the first hymnbook have lasted to bless generations of those who call themselves Latter-day Saints.

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Chapter Notes:

THE AMERICAN STAR.

Come, strike the bold anthem! the war-dogs are howling.
Already they eagerly snuff up their prey;
The red clouds of war o'er our forests are scowling,
Soft peace spreads her wings and flies away.
The infants affrighted, cling close to their mothers,
The youths grasp their swords, for the combat prepare
While beauty weeps, fathers and lovers, and brothers,
All rush to display the American star.

Come, blow the shrill bugle-the loud drum awaken,
The dread rifle seize, let the cannon deep roar;
No heart with pale fear or faint doubting be shaken,
No slave's hostile foot leave a print on our shore.
Shall mothers, wives, daughters and sisters left weeping,
Insulted by ruffians, be dragged to despair?
Oh, no! from the hills the proud eagle comes swooping,
And waves to the brave the American star.

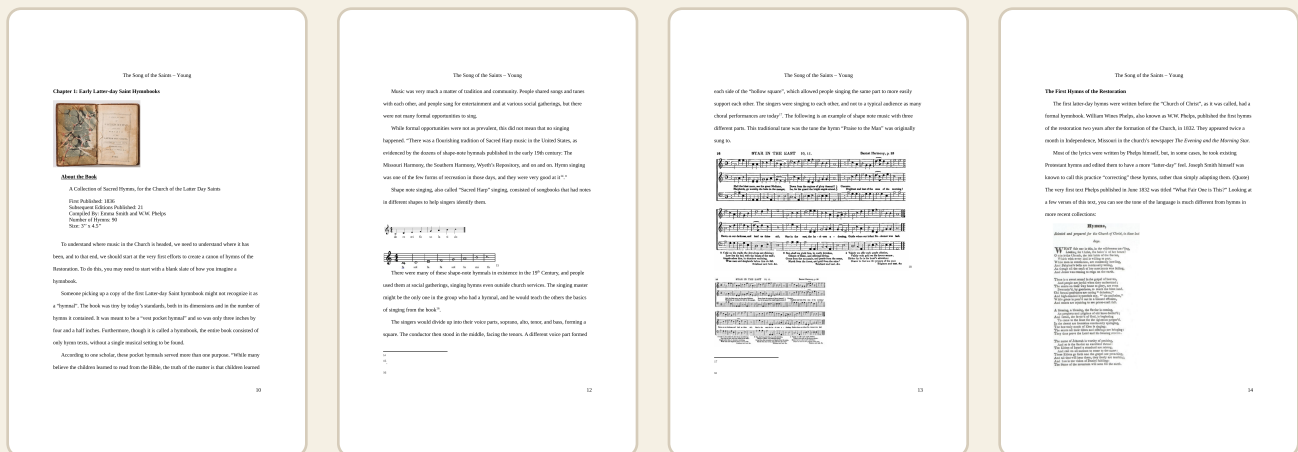
The spirits of Washington, Warren, Montgomery,
Look down from the clouds with bright aspect serene;
Come, soldiers, a tear and a toast to their memory,
Rejoicing they'll see us as they once have been.
To us the high boon by the gods has been granted,
To spread the glad tidings of liberty far;
Let millions invade us, we meet them undaunted,
And conquer or die by the- American star.

Your hands, then, dear comrades, round liberty's altar
United, we swear by the souls of the brave,
Not one from the strong resolution shall falter,
To live independent or sink in the grave.
Then, freemen, fill up, lo! the striped banner's flying,
The high bird of liberty screams through the air:
Beneath her oppression and tyranny dying,
Success to the beaming American star³⁸.

The Song Continues

Follow the hymnbook story across generations

Chapter 1 begins with Emma Smith, W. W. Phelps, and the first hymnbooks of the Restoration. The full book continues through expansion, twentieth-century hymnals, the 1985 green hymnbook, the worldwide hymn project, children's songbooks, and the lived experiences that make sacred music part of memory and worship.



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"The song of the righteous is a prayer unto me."

Doctrine and Covenants 25:12

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