

## HYMNS OF CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA

### The Susquehanna Valley in the United Methodist Hymnal

by Dr. Milton Loyer, 1998

#### 0. Prelude

I invite you to journey with me through the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church. We'll travel down the Susquehanna River Valley -- from the headwaters of the West Branch of the Susquehanna near Clearfield and the entrance of the North Branch of the Susquehanna into Pennsylvania north of Towanda, through Sunbury, past Harrisburg, and toward the Chesapeake Bay. But this trip will be unlike any you have ever taken. It will be a musical journey, and our roadmap will be our United Methodist Hymnal!

This excursion leads to 10 cities, 11 authors and 22 hymns in the present United Methodist Hymnal that have a direct connection to the Central Pennsylvania Conference -- the itinerary is given on the following page. Sit back, relax, and have a pleasant trip. And don't forget your roadmap -- having a copy of the United Methodist Hymnal at hand as you read will help you get the most from this adventure.

#### 1. Williamsport

Turn to hymn #254, *We Three Kings of Orient Are*. Our journey fittingly begins considering the birth of Jesus. The words and music to this popular Christmas carol were composed by John Henry Hopkins Jr. in 1857, and they have been included in Methodist hymnals since 1935. Geographically, we begin at Christ Episcopal Church at Fourth and Mulberry Streets in Williamsport, where Hopkins served as pastor for 11 years -- from 1876 to 1887.

Born in Pittsburgh, this son of an Episcopal bishop worked as a reporter and studied law at the University of Vermont before entering General Theological Seminary in New York City. After graduation, he remained at the seminary to become its first instructor in church music and wrote *We Three Kings of Orient Are* while teaching music there. Ordained a priest late in life, in 1872, Hopkins only ever pastored at two churches -- briefly at Trinity Church in Plattsburg NY and Williamsport's Christ Episcopal, which maintains an archives of his musical works and other personal artifacts.

Hopkins was a scholarly man of many talents. He published two books of poems, from one of which, *Poems by the Wayside*, 1883, several hymns have been taken. The companion to the 1940 Episcopal Hymnal describes him as "one of the great leaders in the development of hymnody in the Episcopal church during the mid-nineteenth century."

**Itinerary:  
The Susquehanna Valley in the United Methodist Hymnal**

1. Williamsport Are	John Henry Hopkins (1820-1891)	#254 We Three Kings of Orient
2. Pottsgrove	Washington Gladden (1836-1918)	#430 O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee
3. Lewisburg	Robert Lowry (1826-1899)	#322 Up from the Grave He Arose #362 Nothing but the Blood of Jesus #397 I Need Thee Every Hour #723 Shall We Gather at the River #733 Marching to Zion
4. New Berlin	Elisha A. Hoffman (1839-1929)	#133 Leaning on the Everlasting Arms
5. Towanda	Philip P. Bliss (1838-1876)	#165 Hallelujah! What a Savior #377 It Is Well with My Soul #600 Wonderful Words of Life
6. Danville	Joseph Parry (1841-1903)	#479 Jesus, Lover of My Soul
7. Duncannon	William Kirkpatrick (1838-1921)	#462 'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus
8. Harrisburg	John Wyeth (1770-1858)	#198 My Soul Gives Glory to My God #226 My Master, See, the Time Has Come #400 Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing #518 O Thou, in Whose Presence #726 O Holy City, Seen of John
9. Carlisle Jesus	George Duffield (1818-1888) Lee Hastings Bristol (1923-1979)	#514 Stand Up, Stand Up, for  #589 The Church of Christ, in Every Age
10. Mechanicsburg	Benjamin Hanby (1833-1867)	#190 Who Is He in Yonder Stall?

This particular hymn is more than beautiful words with an inspiring tune, and it typifies Hopkins' careful style. The first stanza sets the stage, stanzas 2-4 describe the significance of the three gifts, and the last stanza majestically proclaims Jesus to be "King and God and sacrifice." The next time you sing this hymn, remember that its author was for over ten years the Episcopal rector in Williamsport.

## 2. Pottsgrove

Turn to hymn #430, *O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee*. Following the West Branch of the Susquehanna south to Milton, we leave the river to journey five miles east into Northumberland County to Pottsgrove. Born there in 1836 on the family farm at the edge of town, Washington Gladden went on to become a Congregational pastor. Known as a social activist, particularly in the area of industrial relations between workers and their employers, Gladden wrote a poem of 3 eight-line stanzas in 1879 to encourage common people working in a hostile world.

The text given in most hymnals is the first and third stanzas of that poem, each broken into two four-line verses. What was the second stanza of the original poem reveals the author's sense of frustration in this area and has been omitted from the text of the hymn. That omitted second stanza reads as follows.

*O master, let me walk with thee  
Before the taunting Pharisee;  
Help me to bear the sting of spite,  
The hate of men who hide thy light.  
The sore distrust of souls sincere  
Who cannot read Thy judgments clear,  
The dullness of the multitude,  
Who dimly guess that thou are good.*

Gladden served as moderator of the National Council of Congregational Churches 1904-07. An early advocate of the Social Gospel, he gives his personal social creed in his *Recollections*, 1909, as follows:

*Because the Christian life is the noblest life; because it is more blessed to give than to receive, and better to minister than to be ministered unto; because the good life is not found in separating yourself from your fellows, but by identifying yourself with them -- therefore, let us be Christians. If the church would dare to preach and practice the things which Jesus Christ commanded, she would soon regain her lost power.*

While Gladden's militant preaching and writing stirred the nation for many years, Methodist hymnologist Robert Guy McCutchan pays this tribute to him and his words to *O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee*. "This hymn alone, had he done no other writing, would have given him a place among the leaders in awakening the new

social consciousness." From the Pottsgrove farmlands of Northumberland County arose this man of conviction and his stirring message.

### 3. Lewisburg

Turn to hymn #723, *Shall We Gather at the River*. Returning to the Susquehanna River, we continue south to Lewisburg. It was there that Robert Lowry graduated from Bucknell University in 1854 with the highest honors of his class. Born in Philadelphia in 1826, he returned to Lewisburg to pastor the Baptist church there and to teach at Bucknell University 1869-1875. This preacher, professor, administrator and popular orator did not take up the study of music seriously until after his fortieth birthday.

Highly gifted with musical and poetic talent, he wrote both words and melody for many of his songs. Asked whether he wrote the music to fit the words or vice-versa, he said:

*I have no method. Sometimes the music comes and the words follow, fitted insensibly to the melody. I watch my moods, and when anything strikes me, whether words or music, no matter where I am, at home, or on the street, I jot it down. Often the margin of a newspaper or the back of an envelope serves as a note book. My brain is a sort of spinning machine, I think, for there is music running through it all the time. I do not pick out my music on the keys of an instrument. The tunes of nearly all the hymns I have written have been completed on paper before I tried them on the organ. Frequently the words of the hymn and the music have been written at the same time.*



### Robert Lowry (1826-1899)

Listing all the well-known gospel songs of Lowry would expand this section beyond its limits. The United Methodist Hymnal includes five works of this prolific writer and composer. While living in Lewisburg, Lowry wrote the words and music to #322 *Low in the Grave He Lay*, and the music to #397 *I Need Thee Every Hour* and #733 *Marching to Zion*. He wrote the words and music to #362 *Nothing But the Blood of Jesus* and #723 *Shall We Gather at the River* while living outside the Central Pennsylvania Conference. Bucknell University awarded Lowry an honorary doctor's degree in 1875 and has preserved the Robert Lowry House, which stands at the north edge of the campus, as an office and display area.

It has been said that Lowry was inspired by thoughts of the Susquehanna when he wrote *Shall We Gather at the River*. Probably the most popular of all his hymns, it was so successful, Lowry believed, because its steady tempo conjured up images of brass bands and popular Sousa-style march music. In his writings, he relates the following story of local interest.

*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.*

Lowry was said to possess one of the finest musical libraries in the country. It also abounded in works on the philosophy and science of musical sounds. In fact, one of his labors of love was an attempt to reduce music to a mathematical basis -- creating a new scale based on the number of vibrations per second of various pitches. Biglow and Main, the largest publishers of gospel music in the late 1880's, selected Lowry to serve as editor for most of their song books. He rose to the occasion with his usual scholarly professionalism, and the good quality of the resulting material did much to stimulate the cause of sacred song in this country.

While Lowry is reported to have said that he would rather preach a gospel sermon to an appreciative congregation than write a hymn, there is no doubt but that his songs have touched millions with the gospel message. And who would have thought it -- *Shall We Gather at the River* was inspired by our own Susquehanna!

#### **4. New Berlin**

Turn to hymn #133, *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*. From Lewisburg we travel south to Winfield, at which point we leave the river to journey 7 miles west to

New Berlin. Of strong Pennsylvania German roots, New Berlin was the first denominational headquarters of Jacob Albright's Evangelical Church, which merged to become the Evangelical United Brethren Church in 1946 and the United Methodist Church in 1968. Located in New Berlin was the forerunner of Albright College, Union Seminary -- the school from which Elisha Albright Hoffman graduated and of which his father Francis was principal 1861-1872.

Though he never had any formal training in music, Elisha Hoffman composed his first hymn at the age of 18 and went on to write over 2000 hymns and edit more than 50 gospel songbooks. His works include such favorites as *What a Wonderful Savior, Are You Washed in the Blood?, I Must Tell Jesus, Is Your All on the Altar?*, and *Glory to His Name*.

Elisha Hoffman's Evangelical roots ran deeper than his middle name of Albright. He was born in Orwigsburg, Schuylkill County, famous as the 1821-24 scene of what church historian Ammon Stapleton calls "the greatest local revival the Evangelical Church has ever known." His mother was a sister to early bishop W.W. Orwig, and his father was an Evangelical preacher and presiding elder for over 60 years. But about 1894 successful Evangelical preacher Elisha Hoffman seemed to drop from sight. Both the United Evangelical and the Evangelical Association factions in the denomination's split occurring that year assumed the noted hymn-writer had cast his lot with "the other side." In truth, Hoffman was so disgusted with the unnecessary rift among the followers of Jacob Albright that he spent the latter part of his life as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Benton Harbor MI.



## Elisha Albright Hoffman (1839-1929)

When you next sing the challenging words or spirited music of an Elisha A. Hoffman gospel song, remember that he received his education in New Berlin, Union County, at Union Seminary -- the first enduring school of the Evangelical denomination and the forerunner of today's Albright College.

### 5. Towanda

Turn to hymn #377, *It Is Well with My Soul*. As New Berlin is just north of Sunbury, site of the juncture of the West and North branches of the Susquehanna, we now hop back north to Towanda to begin our journey down the North Branch of the river. Philip P. Bliss was born in 1838 in a cabin with a dirt floor close by Penfield, Clearfield County, near the headwaters of the West Branch of the Susquehanna River. In 1857 he entered the Susquehanna Collegiate Institute in Towanda to prepare for a teaching career. It was there his natural musical abilities were formally encouraged, and he took a teaching position several miles east in Rome, Bradford County, home of a noted singing school and a community of soon-to-be prominent gospel songwriters.

But his passion for music developed as a child, when he would sit and sing with his parents. A large overgrown boy of humble means, he saw his first piano when he was about 10. Passing by a house while returning from the village, he heard the sweetest music of his life. The door stood open, and he was irresistibly drawn in. Barefoot, he entered unobserved and stood at the parlor door listening entranced as a lady played the piano. When she ceased, he exclaimed, "Oh, lady, play some more." Looking around in surprise, and with no appreciation for the potential before her, she responded, "Go out of here with your great feet!"

Bliss made a public profession for Christ in 1850, and worked his way east -- following lumber work and attending schools in Elk Run and East Troy before arriving at Towanda. The singing school in Rome that he subsequently connected with was taught by J.G. Towner, the father of gospel song writer Daniel Brink Towner. Blessed with a remarkably full and resonant voice which had a range from low D-flat to high A-flat, Bliss began to travel throughout the East and Midwest giving concerts and promoting singing schools.

At the urging of the famed Dwight L. Moody, Bliss and evangelist Major D.W. Whittle joined forces to form a gospel team that held meetings across the eastern United States. Mr. Bliss and his wife lost their lives in a tragic train accident just a few days after Christmas, 1876. Returning to his evangelistic work following a holiday visit with his in-laws in Rome, this young gospel songwriter perished when he re-entered a burning railroad car while attempting to rescue his wife. The Blisses are buried in Rome, and their grave is marked by a monument paid for by pennies solicited by D.L. Moody from Sunday School children across the country.

The crash that claimed their lives is famous in railroad history as the Ashtabula OH trestle collapse -- which at the time represented the largest loss of life in any single American railroad disaster. Memorial broadsides were produced to commemorate the crash -- and many of them carried a likeness of Philip Bliss, the most famous person to die in the tragedy. On the opposite page is an 1876 broadside from a book on railroad disasters. It bears the picture and name of P.P. Bliss. Apparently the authors of the book were not gospel song enthusiasts, for they assumed that P.P. Bliss must have been one the engine men of the wrecked train and identify him as such.

One of few sacred musicians adept at writing both words and music, he authored the text and melodies for such enduring favorites as "The Light of the World Is Jesus," "Almost Persuaded," "Whosoever Will," "Dare To Be a Daniel," "Jesus Loves Even Me," and "Let the Lower Lights Be Burning."

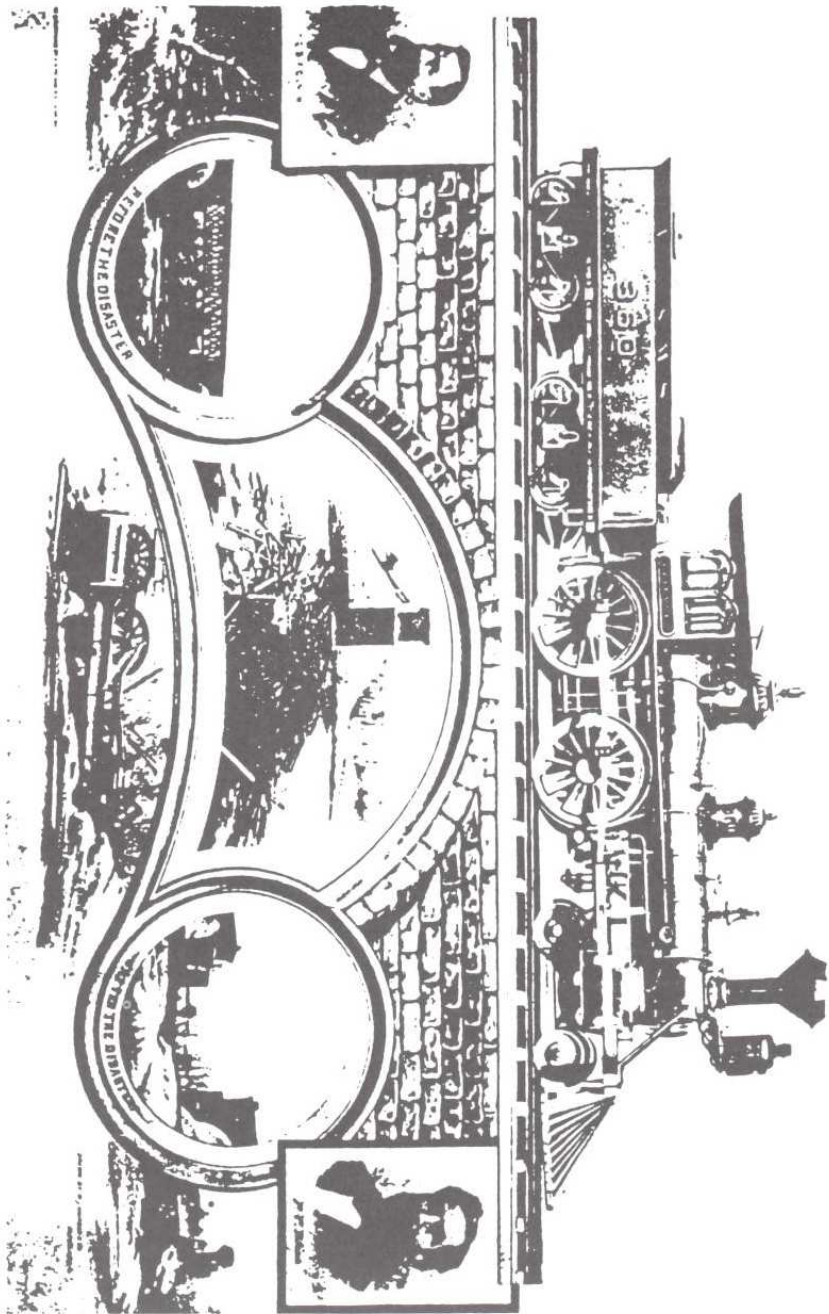
The selections in this hymnal reveal both the depth and breadth of Bliss' musical training and ability -- from the stately music and profound theology of #165 *Hallelujah! What a Savior*, to the lively tempo and lighter words of #600 *Wonderful Words of Life*, to creating the music to convey the moving story behind #377 *It Is Well With My Soul*. Those words were written by Horatio G. Spafford as he journeyed over the spot in the mid-Atlantic where months earlier his four small children had perished when their ship burned and sank. He sent the poem to his friend P.P. Bliss who wrote the tune in the winter of 1876. The ink was hardly dry on the music when he and Lucy boarded the train for their fateful trip to Chicago.

F.W. Root, son and successor in the music business to his eminent father George F. Root, eulogized Bliss as follows:

*If ever a man seemed fashioned by the Divine hand for special and exalted work, that man was P.P. Bliss. He had a splendid physique, a handsome face, and a dignified, striking presence. He had not had opportunities for large intellectual culture, but his natural mental gifts were wonderful. His faculty for seizing upon the salient features of whatever came under his notice amounted to an unerring instinct. The one kernel of wheat in a bushel of chaff was the first thing he saw. Examine the work which really enlisted his whole soul, and you will see nothing but keen discernment, rare taste, and great verbal facility. His gospel hymns contain no pointless verses, awkward rhythms or forced rhymes, but, on the contrary, they glow with all that gives life to such composition.*

The home in Rome PA that Bliss had purchased for his wife's parents has been made into a gospel song museum. Because of Bliss and the others associated with J.G. Towner's school there, the town bills itself as the Gospel Song Capital of

the World. When you sing Bliss' songs, remember the formal schooling in Towanda and informal associations at Rome that gave us this beloved man of God.



THE ASHTABULA DISASTER was the most deadly railroad accident in the United States up to that time. On Dec. 29, 1876, the Lake Shore's great Pacific Express plunged through the high bridge at Ashabula, Ohio, carrying eighty passengers to fiery death. The disaster so shocked the nation that this memorial lithograph was published. It shows the locomotive Columbia, the enginemen, and scenes of the fatal bridge before and after the disaster.

A Bliss Family Photo Collection



Paul Philip Bliss



Lucy Young Bliss



The children of Mr. and Mrs. Bliss, orphaned December 29, 1876.



The Bliss/Young homestead in Rome PA, now the Gospel Songwriters' Museum. It commemorates the works of Bliss and other composers from the immediate area -- including Daniel Brink Towner, A.H. and B.D. Ackley, and James McGranahan.

## 6. Danville

Turn to hymn #479, *Jesus, Lover of My Soul*. Following the North Branch of the Susquehanna from Towanda, we travel outside the Central Pennsylvania Conference and past Wilkes Barre before returning to our conference and arriving at Danville, the home of Joseph Parry. Born in Wales into a very poor family, Parry had to work in the furnaces before he was 10. When he was 13, his family emigrated to the Welsh iron-mining colony at this Montour County town. After he Parry won first prize in a musical contest, his fellow-workers raised money to send him to a normal music school in Genesco NY. He then returned to Wales, entered and won more musical competitions, and eventually studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London 1868-71.

He came back to Danville, the city of his childhood, 1871-73 to serve as church organist, to give concerts featuring songs of his own composition, and to conduct a local singing school. The author of two oratorios, several cantatas and about 400 hymn tunes, he returned again to his native Wales to serve as Professor of Music at a Welsh University. His compositions also include *Blodwen*, 1880, the first Welsh opera. He created the tune ABERYSTWYTH, named for the Welsh town in which it was written, for inclusion in an 1879 Welsh hymnal.

This haunting Welsh melody forms a distinctive setting for Charles Wesley's *Jesus, Lover of My Soul*. It reminds us of Methodism's early successes in Wales and of the Welsh miners in Danville who sacrificed so that Joseph Parry could develop his God-given musical talents.

## 7. Duncannon

Turn to hymn #462, *'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus*. Following the North Branch to Sunbury and its meeting with the West Branch, we continue south to Perry County and Duncannon, the home of William Kirkpatrick. The son of Irish immigrant parents, he apparently inherited his musical abilities from his father -- a music teacher and musician well-known in eighteenth century Mifflin, Juniata, Cumberland and Perry Counties. He was converted at the age of 16 in a revival at the Duncannon Methodist Church. After serving in the Civil War as a fife major with the Pennsylvania 91st Regiment, Kirkpatrick settled in Philadelphia where he became a well-to-do businessman who faithfully served as organist and/or choir director at Methodist churches all his life.

Originally in the furniture business, he pursued gospel music as a labor of love. In 1878 he began to focus all his energies on the gospel song. A talented and prolific writer/composer, he founded *The Praise Publishing Company* for which he compiled more than 600 gospel songbooks. He and his close friend and fellow author/composer John R. Sweeney were partners in several successful ventures. Kirkpatrick's list of gospel song tunes includes such favorites as *Lead Me to Calvary*,



William J. Kirkpatrick (1838-1921)

*Jesus Saves, He Hideth My Soul, O to Be Like Thee, The Comforter Has Come and Redeemed! How I Love to Proclaim It.* In our hymnal, he appears as the composer of #462 *'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus*.

Kirkpatrick was a popular figure at Pennsylvania evangelistic services. Once when he was leading the singing at the Methodist camp meeting at Rawlinsville, Lancaster County, he perceived that his assistant was not a Christian. He returned to his tent, prayerfully composed the words and music to "Lord, I'm Coming Home," and asked the man to sing them as a solo at the evening service. As the words of the chorus

*Coming home, coming home, never more to roam,  
Open wide Thine arms of love, Lord, I'm coming home*

filled the meeting place, the soloist and many others surrendered their lives to Christ.

A lifelong supporter of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Kirkpatrick also edited several songbooks for the denomination -- including at least one for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Perhaps his devotion to his Savior may best be seen in the lines of the gospel song he was working on when God called him home in 1921. He died during the night and was found the next morning slumped across the desk of his Philadelphia residence. Underneath his lifeless body were the last words he penned:

*Just as thou wilt, Lord, this is my cry,  
Just as thou wilt, to live or die.  
I am thy servant, Thou knowest best,  
Just as thou wilt, Lord, labor or rest.*

The second verse, written in a hurried scrawl, lacked his usual neat, firm script:

*Just as thou wilt, Lord, which shall it be?  
Life everlasting waiting for me --  
Or shall I tarry, here at Thy feet?  
Just as thou wilt, Lord, whatever is meet.*

Kirkpatrick is buried in Philadelphia's noted Laurel Hill Cemetery, off City Line Avenue and overlooking the Schuylkill River. But his spirit lives on in Duncannon and across the Conference in the hymns and gospel songs of this faithful Methodist layman.

This melodian was used by William Kirkpatrick to compose hymns. For many years it was in the hands of his niece, Martha Singleton, of New Cumberland. She often recalled how he played it for her when she was a child. It was restored in 1961 by Willis Gilliland, who provided this photograph. When Mrs. Singleton died, it passed to her niece -- who eventually sold it in 1982. Its present whereabouts are unknown.



## 8. Harrisburg

Turn to hymn #400, *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*. Continuing down the Susquehanna river we arrive at Harrisburg. It was there that John Wyeth resided for 35 years as joint-owner and co-editor of that town's early newspaper **The Oracle of Dauphin**. Appointed postmaster of Harrisburg by George Washington in 1773, Wyeth was removed 5 years later by John Adams because of "incompatibility of the office of postmaster and editor of a newspaper." He combined his printing and publishing background with his interest in sacred music to publish a collection of hymns in Harrisburg in 1810. Three years later, he brought out a supplement to the collection that contained several hymn tunes that proved to be of enduring worth.

While there has been minor confusion about the authorship of some of the tunes in Wyeth's collections, most hymnologists agree that he is indeed the composer of those tunes. Three of the hymns in our present United Methodist Hymnal use Wyeth's common meter tune MORNING SONG, a fourth hymn uses the tune DAVIS, and *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing* uses one of his most popular tunes -- NETTLETON.

NETTLETON has also been known as GOOD SHEPHERD and HALLELUJAH, the last name because in the early days of its popularity it was frequently used with the chorus "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! We are on our journey home." Originally in four-part time, it is sometimes credited to Rev. Asahel Nettleton (1734-1844) -- a noted evangelist of the early nineteenth century. As Nettleton's biographer, Bennet Tyler, does not indicate that the evangelist was in any way musically inclined, it seems safe to assume that the tune is Wyeth's.

## 9. Carlisle

Turn to hymn #514, *Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus*. Leaving the Susquehanna River to travel west from Harrisburg, we follow the Conodoquinet and Letort creeks to Carlisle, birthplace of Presbyterian clergyman George Duffield. Also the son and the father of Presbyterian ministers, George Duffield was born while his father was pastoring Carlisle's First Presbyterian Church. In 1858, while pastoring in Philadelphia, George Duffield joined with Episcopal minister Dudley Tyng and several other clergymen to lead a great ecumenical revival that spread across the city.

The last sermon that Rev. Tyng preached before a tragic accident claimed his life was to a noon-time prayer meeting of 5000 working men, over 1000 of which responded to the gospel invitation. Days later, his dying words to his fellow clergymen were, "tell them to stand up for Jesus." The following Sunday, Duffield preached to his congregation from Ephesians 6:14 on the importance of standing fast in the gospel armor; he closed the service with an original poem, *Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus*, based on the final charge of his fallen friend.

The second stanza was adapted from Exodus 10:11, "Go now ye that are men, and serve the Lord," the text of Rev. Tyng's powerful last sermon. To eliminate sexist language, however, the United Methodist Hymnal has substituted the word "brave" for "men" in the third line of the second stanza. In addition, in the third line of the fourth stanza, the United Methodist Hymnal has replaced the masculine singular "To him that overcometh" with the sexually neutral plural "To those who vanquish evil." This type of editing occurs in the United Methodist Hymnal more often than most people realize, and it's only in the very familiar hymns that the changes are apparent.

Turn to hymn #589, *The Church of Christ, in Every Age*. We cannot leave Carlisle without noting that the composer gave this tune the name DICKINSON COLLEGE. Lee Hastings Bristol Jr. served from 1962 to 1969 as the president of

Princeton's Westminster Choir College. It was during his administration that this institution for graduate studies in music achieved its financial and academic stability and respectability. A multi-talented businessman, educator, administrator and musician, Bristol graduated from Hamilton College in New York and did graduate work in music in London and Geneva. He was vice-chair of the Joint Commission on Church Music of the Episcopal Church and a fellow of both the Royal School of Church Music and the Hymn Society of America. He was also the grandson of one of the founders of the Bristol-Myers Pharmaceutical Company and was working as that firm's director of public relations when he composed this tune in 1959.

The music was originally written with alternating measures of 5 and 6 beats for the following lines by Sir Henry Newbolt painted for many years on the front wall of the old chapel/auditorium in Dickinson College's Bosler Hall.

*Here is the Chapel, here, my son,  
Your father thought the thoughts of youth  
And heard the words that one by one  
The touch of life has turned to truth*

The tune was sung for the first time in public in Allison Methodist Church on June 7, 1959. The occasion was that year's Dickinson College Baccalaureate Service and Bristol being awarded an honorary Doctor of Music degree by that institution. The following pages show the original bulletin cover and 1959 printing of the melody. A letter in the Dickinson College archives by Bristol describe his later slight modification of the tune to 5/4 time -- the form in which it appears associated with various texts in this and other denominational hymnals.

*I changed the rhythm of the tune DICKINSON COLLEGE to make it somewhat simpler and turned it into a hymn-tune anthem setting of "Lord of All Being Throned Afar" published by Theodore Presser. Later the tune appeared in More Hymns and Spiritual Songs, one of two supplements to the 1940 Episcopal Hymnal -- of which I was General Editor.*

Although the text follows the common "long meter" of 4 eight-syllable lines, the unusual 5/4 musical setting appears in the hymnal only with this tune.

The words of *The Church of Christ, in Every Age* are by the great modern Methodist hymnist Fred Pratt Green, who some call a twentieth century Charles Wesley. His style follows that of Wesley, the only person to have more hymn texts in the United Methodist Hymnal than Green. The last stanza,

*We have no mission but to serve in full obedience to our Lord  
To care for all, without reserve, and spread his liberating word*

undoubtedly summarizes the founding spirit of Dickinson College and provides a fitting verbal setting for the tune that bears the name of this Carlisle institution.

# DICKINSON COLLEGE

CARLISLE, PENNSYLVANIA

## BACCALAUREATE SERVICE



ALLISON METHODIST CHURCH  
AND  
DICKINSON COLLEGE CHAPEL

TEN-THIRTY O'CLOCK, A. M.  
SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 1959

# THE CHAPEL

(L.M.)

"DICKINSON COLLEGE"

SIR HENRY NEWBOLT

LEE HASTINGS BRISTOL, Jr.

Here is the Cha - pel, here, my son, — Your fa - ther

The first system of musical notation consists of a treble and bass staff. The treble staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a common time signature. The melody is written in a simple, hymn-like style with quarter and eighth notes. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes.

thought the thoughts of youth And heard the words that one by

The second system of musical notation continues the melody and accompaniment from the first system. The treble staff shows the continuation of the vocal line, and the bass staff shows the accompaniment. The lyrics are positioned between the two staves.

one — The touch of life has turned to truth.

The third system of musical notation concludes the piece. The treble staff ends with a double bar line and repeat dots. The bass staff also concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots. The lyrics are positioned between the two staves.

*To Robert Nelson Spencer, D.D., LL.D.*

## 10. Mechanicsburg

Turn to hymn #190, *Who Is He In Yonder Stall?* Returning to the Susquehanna River from Carlisle, we journey through Mechanicsburg. It was here in 1859 that Benjamin Hanby was granted his first license to preach and was received as a member of the Pennsylvania Conference of the United Brethren Church. A native Ohioan, Hanby lived in Pennsylvania as an agent for Otterbein College and other United Brethren interests only briefly before transferring his ministerial credentials back to his home state in 1860.

The son of a United Brethren bishop, Hanby was a gifted musician who also used his talents to write songs other than hymns. The widespread popularity and influence of his moving anti-slavery ballad "Darling Nelly Gray" has led it to be called the musical equivalent of the book Uncle Tom's Cabin. In addition, he is the author of the words and music of the popular Christmas song "Up On the Housetop." As Hanby's desire to use musical instruments in worship caused friction in conservative congregations that preferred to continue singing a capella, he eventually left the ordained ministry to devote himself to writing educational and musical material for Christian publications.



Benjamin R. Hanby (1833-1867)

Using this hymn, one of the very last he composed before his death at the age of 33, to end our travel through the Central Pennsylvania Conference brings closure to the journey in at least two ways. First, remember that today's United Methodist Church includes three distinct predecessor denominations: the Methodists, the Evangelicals, and the United Brethren. Hanby's United Brethren connection complements the Evangelical heritage of Elisha Hoffman and the Methodist faith of William Kirkpatrick to include all three strands of United Methodism in the journey. In addition, the hymn not only allows the journey to conclude as it began, with a

reference to the birth of Christ, but also completes the story by following Jesus through his ministry, death and resurrection.

## 11. Postlude

Despite what the itinerary indicates, our journey is not quite over. Turn to page 917 in the hymnal. It was indicated that our roadmap, the United Methodist Hymnal, would direct us to 10 cities, 11 authors and 22 hymns with connections to the Central Pennsylvania Conference portion of the Susquehanna River valley. Those who are numerically oriented have undoubtedly noticed that the itinerary and journey thus far have included only 21 hymns. The United Methodist Hymnal does direct us to 22 hymns, but unfortunately our roadmap contains an error.

The list of authors and composers on page 917 attributes two hymns attributed to John H. Hopkins, Jr., (1820-1891) -- #254 and #712. We began our journey with #254 *We Three Kings of Orient Are*. We now end our travel by turning to hymn #712 and learning why it is not listed on the itinerary.

Hymn #712 *I Sing a Song of the Saints of God* lists John H. Hopkins, Jr., at the bottom of the page as being the composer of the tune. The date given is 1940, 49 years after the death of our John H. Hopkins, Jr., of Williamsport. The author of this tune is not John H. Hopkins, Jr., (1820-1891) of Williamsport, but rather John H. Hopkins [without the Jr.] (1869-1945) -- nephew of John H. Hopkins, Jr., of Williamsport and also named for that composer's father, Episcopal Bishop John H. Hopkins.

It is, however, fitting that we close our journey by examining *I Sing a Song of the Saints of God*. Although relatively unknown in the United Methodist Church, the hymn has been included in the Episcopal Hymnal since 1940 and has become a favorite in that denomination. It reminds us that God's saints are not only the Peters and Pauls of the Bible and the Martin Luthers and John Wesleys of history. The saints of God are ordinary people, like those we discovered in our journey down the Susquehanna Valley, who have used their God-given talents and opportunities for His honor and glory. As we remember these otherwise ordinary saints of Central Pennsylvania, let us also recommit ourselves to using the talents and opportunities God gives us to be his twentieth-century saints in Central Pennsylvania.

May the concluding stanza of this song about the saints of God, and determining to be a saint of God in this present age, be the prayer of each one of us as we journey wherever God leads.

*They lived not only in ages past; there are hundreds of thousands still.  
The world is bright with the joyous saints who love to do Jesus' will.  
You can meet them in school, on the street, in the store,  
In church, by the sea, in the house next door;  
They are saints of God, whether rich or poor,  
And I mean to be one too.*

## **Appendix I: Other works of Benjamin Hanby.**

*Darling Nelly Gray* was written by Benjamin R. Hanby in 1856 when he was a sophomore at Otterbein College in Westerville OH. The dramatic ballad is based on a true story told by Joseph Selby, a fugitive slave, who died in the Hanby home at Rushville OH.

The Hanby home was a station on the *Underground Railroad*, which Selby was using in his attempt to reach Canada -- where he hoped to earn enough money to purchase the freedom of the girl he ad left behind, Nelly Gray. As he lay dying, he told his sad story. The day before their planned wedding she was sold on the auction block and taken from her home in Kentucky to Georgia.

Ben was only nine when Selby died, but the incident profoundly moved him. Later in life, he poured out his sensitive soul in this song with of simple beauty and pathos. It was first sung by the Hanby children in their parlor before Ben's music teacher Cornelia Walker. With her encouragement it was sent to Oliver Ditson Publishers in Boston.

Soon strains of *Darling Nelly Grey* rang out all across America. It became a campfire song of the Union Army. With altered lyrics, it was also sung in Confederate camps. While the song started the publishing house on its way to prosperity, Ben only received twelve free copies and \$50. "We have received the money," the publishers wrote, "and you the fame. That balances the account."

*Up On the Husetop* was a spontaneous outburst of Benjamin Hanby's heart after passing through one of the most depressing periods of his life. The pastor for two years of Otterbein Chapel in New Paris OH, he resigned under pressure for using musical instrument -- an organ and flute -- in the worship services.

Facing no salary, mounting debts, and declining health, Ben and his wife Kate prepared their two small children for the winter holidays. He rented an empty storeroom and opened a singing school, which was soon filled with children and parents who came to sing and socialize. It was then that he wrote *Up On the Husetop*, which was first sung in this school at Christmas time 1864. The children loved the song, and it soon grew to seven verses.

In 1865, Ben became music editor for the Root & Cady Music Company of Chicago. He moved the family there and spent two years editing a musical quarterly for children called, Our Song Birds -- naming each issue after a different bird. In the fourth issue, called The Dove, *Up On the Husetop* first appeared in print.

Illness claimed Benjamin Hanby in March 1867, and the Chicago Fire of 1871 destroyed the Root & Cady Company's records of his works. But the "click, click, click" of this favorite song lives on to remind us of the joy of Christmas. A registered landmark of the United Methodist Church, the Hanby House in Westerville OH is owned by the Ohio Historical Society and open to the public.

**Appendix II: Misinformation.** Not everything in print about Pennsylvania's gospel song writers is carefully researched and proofread before publication.

### **Elisha Hoffman**

The March 10 page from a 1998 calendar pad with a daily hymn theme, published by Tyndale House, featured Elisha Hoffman's *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*. It reported that Showalter wanted a hymn on dealing with sorrow and "wrote to Elisha Hoffman, a Pennsylvania hymnwriter, suggesting that she [*sic*] write on the theme." While the name Elisha may have a feminine ring to it, the preceding line betrays an unfamiliarity with both gospel song writers and Old Testament prophets.

A 1993 annotated "Old-Time Gospel Songbook" by Mel Bay Publications says that Hoffman was born in 1839 and "spent most of the next ninety years serving God as a minister of the Evangelical United Brethren Church." Hoffman was a member of the Evangelical Association until the 1894 split, but then he spent his remaining years serving Presbyterian and Congregational churches. He died well before the 1946 formation of the Evangelical United Brethren denomination. That same publication credits A.J. Showalter, composer of the tune for Hoffman's *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*, with being born in Cherry Grove PA instead of Cherry Grove VA.

Sometimes, inconsistencies arise from a single source. Noted hymnologist William J. Reynolds writes a weekly "History of Hymns" column for **The United Methodist Reporter**. Twice he has featured the story behind the writing of Elisha Hoffman's *I Must Tell Jesus*. In each instance, the general details of the scenario are the same -- except that in one account he supposedly wrote the hymn while a pastor of the Evangelical Association in Lebanon PA, while the other account has him writing the hymn in 1894 while a Presbyterian pastor in Vassar MI.

### **Philip Bliss**

The tragic death of P.P. Bliss at an early age and with no knowledgeable adults able to provide details of his life leaves his story particularly vulnerable to inaccuracies. There is even confusion as to whether he was truly born Philip Paul Bliss or whether he assumed those names at a later date.

Charles Yost was preparing a book on Moody and Sankey was Bliss and his wife were killed. He added a chapter on P.P. Bliss for its 1877 publication date, and titled the volume "Hold the Fort" -- after the Bliss' most famous song at the time, and the one that is referenced on the monument erected to his memory in the Rome PA cemetery. As Bliss was so identified with Rome, Yost erroneously states that he "was born in the village of Rome, Bradford County, Pennsylvania."

Once that mistake appeared in print, it became difficult to correct. Some writers, upon learning that he was actually born near Penfield, even listed his birthplace as Penfield, Bradford County -- instead of Clearfield County.

### Appendix III. The P.P. Bliss monument.

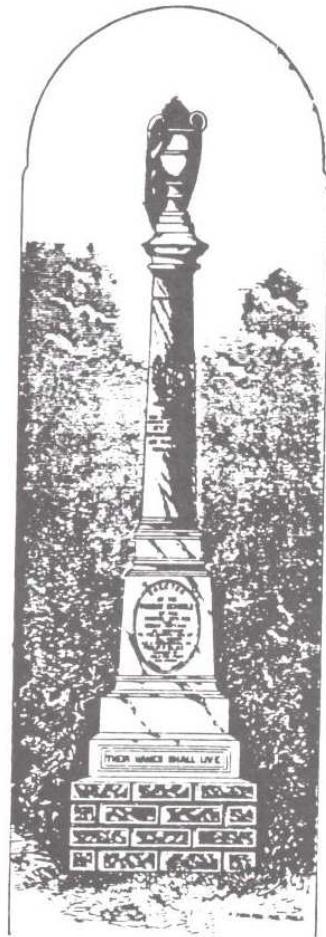
So intense was the fire from the Ashtabula railroad disaster, that the bodies of P.P. Bliss and his wife were never identified. At first it was even reported that their two small children had also perished in the tragedy, but then it was discovered they had remained with their grandparents in Rome.

One of P.P. Bliss' trunks had been checked on an earlier train, and it contained what was probably the last poem he had written -- *I Will Sing of My Redeemer*. Early in 1877 Bliss' friend James McGranahan saw the poem and composed its now familiar tune. It was first sung at an evangelistic meeting by a men's quartet composed of McGranahan, composer George C. Stebbins, and two leading baritones from Chicago.

Some months later Mr. Stebbins was in New York City and attended an exhibition of the Edison phonograph. In a demonstration recording, he sang the new song -- giving it the distinction of being one of the first songs ever recorded on Edison's new invention.

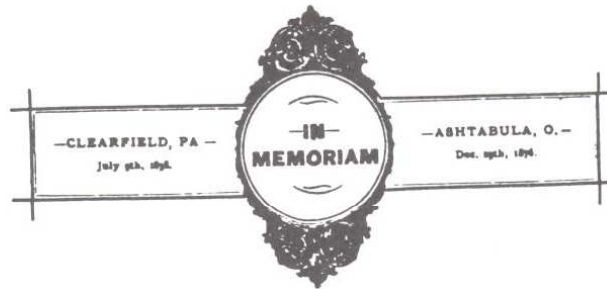
The monument at the right was dedicated July 10, 1877. It reads:

Erected  
by the  
Sunday Schools  
of the  
United States  
and  
Great Britain  
in response  
to the invitation of  
D.L. Moody  
as a memorial to  
Philip P. Bliss  
author of  
Hold the Fort  
and other  
gospel songs



On the next page is the cover of the memorial booklet for that event.

SONGS  
—OF—  
P. P. BLISS.



SUNG AT ROME, PA., JULY 10TH.

—AT—  
MEMORIAL SERVICES,

—PREPARED BY—  
D. L. MOODY,

In Dedication of the Monument erected to the memory of P. P. Bliss by contributions from the  
Sunday-Schools of the United States and Great Britain.

—Words used by permission of John Church & Co., owners of copyright.—