

BRETHREN HYMNOLOGY

by JOHN S. ANDREWS

WHILE several hymns composed by people associated with the Brethren movement have found their way into a large number of well-known hymn-books, both interdenominational and denominational, little has been done by way of a systematic study of the movement's hymnology. This article, by a graduate of Birmingham University and Assistant Librarian in the Brotherton Library of Leeds University, provides a useful and discriminating introduction to such a study.

I

THE late Professor A. Rendle Short maintained that the hymnology of the "Brethren" had never been properly appreciated outside their own circle.¹ This is partly because there are so many hymnbooks in use, especially among Open Brethren.

Julian gives details of the hymnbooks produced up to 1889. Since then three new editions of the Exclusives' *Hymns for the little flock* have appeared, each substantially different from one another.² LF 1903 contains 402 hymns. The preface says that some forty rarely-sung hymns have been replaced by others. To justify alterations in some of the hymns retained it stresses that the object "is not to give a collection of original hymns, but to provide . . . utterances suited for singing in the assembly. Other collections supply hymns . . . for private use . . ." J. N. Darby in LF 1881 had already mentioned changes necessitated by putting "we" for

¹ Short, pp. 100-101. (For full references see Bibliography on pp. 228 f. below.) Professor William Robinson, formerly of Selly Oak Colleges and not one of the "Brethren", agrees (*The shattered Cross: the many churches and the one Church*, 1945, reprinted 1953, p. 52). Like Short, I use the terms "Open" and "Exclusive" and spell "Brethren" with a capital solely for convenience; I also omit as misleading the adjective "Plymouth" sometimes used. Neither section claims an exclusive right over other Christians to the Scriptural title "brethren". For fuller details of some of the hymn-writers mentioned in the second part of this article see pp. 218 ff. below.

² Cited as "LF 1903", "LF 1932", and "LF 1951". *Hymns selected and revised in 1894* and *Hymns selected and revised in 1928* contain so many items from LF 1881 as to constitute perhaps two more editions. Noel does not seem to know the 1894 edition (see Noel, vol. 2, p. 629).

"T". This explains, though it cannot justify, the appearance, for example, of "When we survey the world's cross" in LF 1881 and 1903. This principle is followed in LF 1932 and 1951.¹ LF 1951 owes its existence to the desire for "a universal hymn book which would truly express the truth of Ephesians 4: 4-6". A. E. Myles has sought for material in various languages, the intention being to translate the collection into all the languages used by Brethren. Perhaps the only collection of "gospel hymns" produced by the Exclusives is *The evangelist's hymnal*, compiled in 1906 by Dr. W. T. P. Wolston of Edinburgh, who later became a leader in the "Glanton" section of Brethren.

Among Open Brethren no hymn book has attained the universality of the Exclusives' LF.² A similar desire to reduce the number of books inspired the production in 1909 by the Open Brethren of *Hymns for Christian worship and service*,³ which unites J. U. Scobell's *Hymns and spiritual songs for the children of God* and *Hymns and spiritual songs compiled in Bristol*. In 1920 it had reached its fifth impression, but is now, I believe, out of print. It contains 819 hymns. In 1906 *Hymns and spiritual songs for the children of God* was enlarged to include 630 items. It is still in use. *Hymns of light and love*, compiled mostly by Dr. Maclean of Bath and W. H. Bennet of Yeovil, is widely used.⁴ It contains 898 hymns, first appeared in 1900, and is still in print.⁵ *The believers hymn book* is popular, especially in the Midlands and the North.⁶ Messrs. Pickering & Inglis kindly inform me that it was first published in 1884 and is still in print. It contains only 361 hymns and is less eclectic than those just mentioned. Another collection used by Open Brethren is Charles Russell Hurditch's *London hymn book*, first published in 1865.⁷ He was the author of a number of hymns, all, says Julian, "characterized by great simplicity and earnestness". They include the moving lines:

He dies ! He dies ! the lowly Man of sorrows,
On whom were laid our many griefs and woes ;

¹ Though the singular is restored to the hymn quoted. LF 1932 contains 382 ; LF 1951, 480 items.

² Even some Open Assemblies use it.

³ Cited as "HCW". Dr. Charles Sims of Exeter has recently announced the preparation of another "universal" collection.

⁴ Cited as "L & L".

⁵ The publishers issue the Brethren's missionary bulletin, *Echoes of service*.

⁶ Cited as "BH".

⁷ The 1875 reprint (260 hymns) is cited as "LHB". Probably superseded now by his *Enlarged London hymn book*.

Our sins He bore, beneath God's awful billows,
And He hath triumphed over all our foes . . .¹

Joseph Denham Smith's *Times of refreshing* (first published 1860) was, and perhaps is, extensively used in Ireland and parts of England.² His words for those bereaved are comforting:

Yes, we part, but not for ever,
Joyful hopes our bosoms swell !
They who love the Saviour never
Know a long, a last farewell.
Blissful unions
Lie beyond this parting vale . . .³

For missionary meetings a hymnal sponsored by the publishers of L & L ("*Echoes of Service*" *Missionary Hymnal*) is often used. It used to contain 187 items; the recent reprint includes twenty extra ones suggested by the late Professor A. Rendle Short. John Ritchie has recently published for Open Brethren 35 *Additional hymns*, so that worship might "more intelligently reflect our position in Christ and our relationship to the Father and the Son".

II

Open Brethren have mostly been content with existing tunes; but their collections do contain a number of hymns that they have set to music. Exclusives contribute over a score of tunes to the beautifully produced 1954 edition of their *Little flock tune book*. Details cannot be given here owing to lack of space. Neither section of the Brethren uses instrumental accompaniment at "worship" meetings,⁴ and most Exclusives dispense with it at "gospel" meetings too.

This perhaps too rigid distinction between the two types of service is characteristic of the Movement, and no one can begin to understand it without attending both services. The distinction affects the choice of hymns and hymn books. Brethren hymn books are used normally at the morning meeting and at other times when the "saints" are assembled.⁵ For the evening "gospel" meeting Open Brethren often prefer a less "denominational" book, e.g., Sankey's *Sacred songs and solos*, the C.S.S.M.'s *Golden bells*, or Pickering & Inglis's *Redemption songs*. Such collections, in-

¹ HCW. Also L & L.

² The 7th ed., 1863 (134 hymns), is cited as "TR".

³ HCW. Also L & L, LHB, TR; and C. E. B. Young, ed., *Hymns of prayer and praise*, 1921 (cited as "Young"). For details of Smith see Julian and Noel, vol. 1, pp. 108-110.

⁴ [With a few exceptions in the case of "Open" meetings.—Ed.]

⁵ Note the titles of some of their collections, e.g., the earliest of all. "Hymns for . . . the Church of Christ"; or the Open Party's "Hymns . . . for the children of God" and "Hymns for Christian worship".

tended primarily for mission services, are more familiar to the general public. Nevertheless since 1848 some Brethren books have included a small selection of "gospel hymns". In Open Brethren books they appear in a special section.¹ In the Exclusives' LF practice has varied. In 1881 they appear in an "Appendix". In 1903 there is no Appendix, but they still appear at the end. The 1932 revisers added more of them and arranged them alphabetically, still at the end. In 1951 such items are distributed through the book; it was realized that the difference between "worship" and "gospel" hymns is not clearcut. J. N. Darby's warning in LF 1881 about "gospel" hymns is of value:

Abstractedly you are making people sing as having certain feelings, and then preaching to them because they have not.

But in actual Christendom things are not so sharply defined, and there are hidden souls and hidden wants which the hymn may give expression to, and set a soul free or make it apprehend God's love sometimes more effectually than the sermon.²

Julian misunderstands Brethren practice. The books up to 1848, he asserts, "contain hymns for 'the Assembly of the Saints', i.e. the Brethren themselves met in worship". Later books "contain also a selection . . . for the 'unconverted', i.e. those who are not in full communion with themselves". The following assurance, from a somewhat hostile critic of the Movement, is still needed:

[this] extraordinary assertion . . . is a very great, and indeed totally groundless calumny upon the Brethren, who have (with some absolutely insignificant exceptions) always used the term "unconverted" according to immemorial evangelical custom.³

The Exclusives' "official" hymnbook is worth quoting:

The words "For the Little Flock" are retained . . . to distinguish this hymn-book from others; they are not used in any narrower sense than attaches to the Lord's words to His disciples in Luke xii. 32.⁴

Brethren have composed few pure "gospel hymns"; but Albert Midlane's works should not go unnoticed.⁵ Nor should Mrs. E. F. Bevan's translation of *Jesus nimm die Sünder an!* as *Sinners Jesus will receive*.⁶

¹ True to its title, "The *believers* hymnbook" contains few pure "gospel hymns" and has no such section. Nor have the small collections, LHB and TR.

² All this preface is worth reading. It is substantially reprinted in LF 1903, 1932, and 1951. Julian quotes a short extract.

³ Neatby, p.x.

⁴ LF 1932, preface (reprinted in LF 1951).

⁵ For details see below, p. 225.

⁶ HCW. Also *Presbyterian Church hymnary* (revised ed. 1927), and *Methodist hymn book* (1933). See also Julian, s.v. "Neumeister, Erdmann"

John Withy has also contributed a few such hymns, e.g., "*Behold the Lamb of God!*"¹ and *Come, sing the hallowed story*.² Sir Edward Denny's *Sweeter, O Lord, than rest to Thee* should be better known:

... Friend of the lost, O Lord, in Thee
 Samaria's daughter there
 Found One, whom love had drawn to earth
 Her weight of guilt to bear ...
 Through all that sweet and blessed scene,
 Dear Saviour, by the well,
 More than enough the trembler finds,
 His guilty fears to quell ...²

The neglect of certain themes is due to the Brethren's stress on "purity of doctrine". The preface to the music edition of BH affirms that:

the songs of the Church, when according to truth, are a vehicle of mutual exhortation of great value ...

And if praise occupies so important a place in the Church, how very important it must be that the ... hymns be varied and *scriptural*.³

The compilers of HCW are confident that the contents will be found to be "in strict agreement with the teachings of the Word of God". In L & L "the maintenance of the great foundations of the faith" has been aimed at. Exclusives are even more explicit. G. V. Wigram in 1856 tried to exclude from LF false doctrine, dispensational incongruities and other inconsistencies. In 1881 Darby's first rule is a "basis of truth and sound doctrine". In many hymns

there is real piety in the affections, but connected with statements which may not touch any great foundational truth, but are unscriptural. ... Thus, suppose uncertainty as to salvation, the absence of the spirit of adoption ... and souls are quite angry at losing a hymn which their piety has enjoyed, but which has connected their hopes ... with what is not scriptural. Many such have been eliminated heretofore from the collection ...

... Many hymns have been corrected on the principles referred to ...

Finally ... the great principle in selecting and correcting has been that there should be nothing in the hymns for the assembly but what was the expression of, or at least consistent with, the Christian's conscious place in Christ before the Father.⁴

¹ HCW. ² HCW. Also L & L. ³ My italics.

⁴ This last sentence probably explains Darby's amendment of Newman's hymn to "Lead, light divine, amid th' encircling gloom" in LF 1881 (Appendix). Open collections and later editions of LF omit the hymn entirely, presumably because of its author. Though omission is better than amendment, Brethren have deprived themselves of some fine lines. Cf. the reason for the Open Brethren's *Additional hymns* (p. 210, above).

The later revisers of LF avow the same principles; but Open Brethren and some Exclusives cannot accept the way in which they have been applied.¹

There are few hymns for the "saints" connected with, e.g., the confession of sins; such hymns might lead to non-evangelical ministry. Exclusives went too far in rewriting Charlotte Elliott's hymn as "Just as I was—without one plea"² or Toplady's as "Rock of Ages! cleft for *sin*, *Grace hath hid us safe within!*"³ So-called Brethren "perfectionism"³ has laid them open to the charge of affecting superior sanctity. Yet Darby himself composed at least one hymn that beautifully expresses the repentant feelings of the convert:

O Lord, Thy love's unbounded !

So sweet, so full, so free:

My soul is all transported,

Whene'er I think of Thee.

Yet, Lord, alas! what weakness

Within myself I find;

No infant's changing pleasure

Is like my wandering mind . . .

Oh, guard my soul, then, Jesus,

Abiding still with Thee;

And if I wander, teach me

Soon back to Thee to flee . . .⁴

This hymn, first published in 1845, was inspired by J. G. Deck's

O Lord, Thy love's unbounded !

So full, so vast, so free !

Our thoughts are all confounded

Whene'er we think of Thee:

¹ For an adverse criticism of LF 1903 and 1932 see Noel, vol. 2, pp. 626-632 (by a representative of the "Lowe" section of Exclusives); he includes an extract from the official explanation of the 1932 Revision. G. H. Lang (an Open Brother) attacks both LF 1932 and 1951 (*The local assembly*, 5th ed., 1955, chap. 6B: "Exclusive Brethren").

² LF 1881 and 1903. LF 1932, 1951, and the Open collections follow the author's wording. Open collections contain few amended versions.

³ For an example see p. 221 below.

⁴ J. N. Darby's *Spiritual songs*, 1883 (cited as "Darby"). Also LF 1881 (Appendix), 1903, 1932, 1951; BH, HCW, L & L, TR.

For us Thou cam'st from heaven,
 For us to bleed and die,
 That, purchased and forgiven,
 We might ascend on high . . .¹

Darby's hymn and others in the sections on "Holiness and consecration" in BH and HCW and "The path of His people" in L & L refute statements that Brethren books reveal no contrite feeling. Despite the weaknesses of individuals, Short's words hold good of the Movement as a whole, although written of the Open Body:

we do not profess to be holier, as individuals, than other Christians, but recognise gladly that there are very many amongst ourselves and them who do steadfastly make it their aim to follow His steps, though it be with oft-times wandering and stumbling feet.²

That the desire for pure doctrine is not purely negative is shown in LF 1951. For the first time in an Exclusive book songs of praise to the Holy Spirit appear. In the past objections had been raised that the work of the Spirit was disparaged or neglected. Neatby explains that Brethren do not pray that they might receive the Holy Ghost because they are sure that they have already received Him.

On the other hand, that they ever questioned the propriety of praying for more of the influence of the Holy Ghost is a statement quite without foundation.³

The following stanza reflects current Exclusive ministry:

O Spirit most holy
 Our homage we render ;
 From Christ and the Father
 Thou camest below.
 Thy presence and pleasure
 We honour and treasure,
 As giv'n without measure,
 God's wealth to bestow.⁴

¹ LF 1881, 1903, 1932 ; LHB, TR. In BH, HCW, L & L, and Young the first stanza begins "O Lord, who now art seated", the above lines forming stanza three. On Daniel Sedgwick's authority, Julian erroneously attributes both hymns to Darby (s.v. "Darby").

² P. 77. ³ Pp. 235-236.

⁴ LF 1951 (stanza 3 of *Our Father, we praise Thee*).

The Open HCW contains eleven hymns in the section "The Holy Spirit", including four by John Withy and the following lines by R. C. Chapman :

The Dove that once on Jesus sat,
Can now on us abide,
Revealing God the Father's face
In Jesus glorified.

Take heed, my soul, and watch and pray,
Lest thou the Spirit grieve,
Who makes thee know the Father's love,
And in the Son believe.

Hail, Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
In love and counsel one:
This threefold cord, this rock is ours,
How shall we be undone ?

Besides hymns classified elsewhere in L & L there is a specific section on the Trinity.

Brethren differ about baptism. Most Exclusives are paedobaptists, while Open Brethren baptize believers only. This may explain why the former omit the first stanza of Deck's *Around Thy grave, Lord Jesus* with its possibly Baptist implications. All evangelicals might sing the rest:

Lord Jesus, we remember
The travail of Thy soul,
When through Thy love's deep pity,
The waves did o'er Thee roll.

Baptised in death's dark waters,
For us Thy blood was shed ;
For us Thou, Lord of glory,
Wast numbered with the dead . . .¹

Julian implies that baptism is a favourite theme of the Brethren. In fact, BH in its "Index of subjects" lists only three relevant hymns, and the sections devoted to it in HCW and L & L consist of only nine and six respectively. Editions of LF have no such index or sections ; but they probably include few items. Undue stress is avoided because, as Withy writes:

¹ LF 1951 (first stanza). Also LF 1881, 1903, 1932 (all first stanza), BH, HCW, L & L, Young (all second stanza). *The Baptist Church hymnal* (revised ed., 1933) has an adapted version of the hymn.

... This water is but symbol ;
 Thy death, Thy grave was real ;
 We, through its likeness passing,
 What Thou hast felt, ne'er feel . . .¹

Since Brethren observe the Lord's Supper every Sunday, this other sacrament is more fully represented in their books.² Chapman writes:

No bone of Thee was broken,
 Thou spotless, paschal Lamb !
 Of life and peace a token
 To us who know Thy Name . . .
 We eat and drink with gladness
 The symbol bread and wine,
 And sing with sweetest sadness
 Our song of love divine.³

Denny writes:

Sweet feast of love divine !
 'Tis grace that makes us free
 To feed upon this bread and wine,
 In memory, Lord, of Thee . . .⁴

Deck's hymn, *We bless our Saviour's Name*, concludes:

O let Thy love constrain
 Our souls to cleave to Thee !
 And ever in our hearts remain
 That word, "Remember Me!"⁵

Neatby unjustly calls the Movement "the child of the study of unfulfilled prophecy, and of the expectation of the immediate return of the Saviour"; but Brethren certainly shared the interest of early nineteenth-century evangelicals in the Second Advent. It holds a prominent place in their collections, and more of their hymns might have come into common use but for their frequent

¹ HCW (*Behold Thy servants keeping, / O Lord, Thy loved command*). Also L & L, although these lines are omitted.

² *Pace Der grosse Brockhaus*, s.v. "Darbysten" (16th ed., 1953): "Auf Taufe und Abendmahl verzichten sie"! Cf. the more accurate 15th ed., 1929: "Taufe und Abendmahl werden zur Seligkeit nicht für erforderlich gehalten." On the Lord's Supper BH has 16 hymns, HCW 31, and L & L 49.

³ BH. Also HCW ; L & L.

⁴ BH. Also HCW, L & L ; Young, *Presbyterian Church hymnary* (1898), and *Golden bells (Supplement)*.

⁵ BH. Also HCW, L & L ; LF 1881, 1903.

expression of millenarian sentiments.¹ Deck's hymn is sung by both sections:

"A little while!"—the Lord shall come,
And we shall journey here no more;
He'll take us to His Father's home,
Where He for us is gone before,
To dwell with Him, to see His face,
And sing the glories of His grace . . .²

Denny composed a number of hymns on this theme, e.g.:

Hope of our hearts, O Lord, appear!
Thou glorious Star of day,
Shine forth, and chase the dreary night,
With all our tears, away.
No resting-place we seek on earth,
No loveliness we see;
Our eye is on the royal crown,
Prepared for us and Thee . . .³

The pilgrim's dissatisfaction with the world and the rest to be found in Christ are often expressed. In 1849⁴ these words of Darby's first appeared:

This world is a wilderness wide:
I have nothing to seek or to choose,
I've no thought in the waste to abide,
I've nought to regret nor to lose . . .
For the path where my Saviour is gone,
Has led up to His Father and God,
To the place where He's now on the throne;
And His strength shall be mine on the road . . .⁵

In 1879 it was sung at the funeral of G. V. Wigram, one of Darby's earliest and most loyal supporters.⁶

Neatby says:

The heavenly exaltation of the saints in Christ was the constant topic of the conversation of the Brethren, as it was also the sublime theme that ennobled their hymns.⁷

¹ See Neatby, p. 339, and J. Moffatt, ed., *Handbook to the [revised] Church hymnary* (1927), s.v. "Darby", "Deck", "Denny". Lang points out that Brethren differed widely about prophecy (*Groves*, chap. 15, sect. 3: "The Coming of the Lord"). BH has 28 hymns, HCW 29, L & L 32, under such headings as "The Lord's Return"; but this classification excludes several items.

² LF 1951. Also LF 1881, 1903, 1932; BH, HCW, L & L, LHB; Young.

³ BH. Also HCW, L & L; LF 1903, 1932, 1951.

⁴ I.e., only shortly after the unhappy schism of 1848.

⁵ Darby. Also LF 1881, 1903, 1932, 1951; BH, HCW, L & L, TR.

⁶ Noel, vol. 1, p. 60. ⁷ P. 279.

As early as 1837 Deck asked the question, *Lord Jesus, are we one with Thee?* a hymn that has appeared in many Brethren collections. Miller praises it as "a model of unity, while speaking eloquently of the higher spiritual unity".¹ It concludes:

And soon shall come that glorious day,
When, seated on Thy throne,
Thou shalt to wond'ring worlds display
That we with Thee are one.²

The full assurance of faith is heard in one of Dr. S. P. Tregelles' last hymns:

Lord Jesus, we believing
In Thee have peace with God,
Eternal life receiving,
The purchase of Thy blood.
Our curse and condemnation
Thou barest in our stead;
Secure is our salvation
In Thee, our risen Head . . .³

Julian says that the theme of many of the Brethren's best hymns is the efficacy alone of the blood of Christ for salvation. Deck's lines might serve as an example:

When first, o'erwhelmed with sin and shame
To Jesus' Cross I trembling came,
Burdened with guilt, and full of fear,
Yet drawn by love to venture near,
Pardon I found, and peace with God,
In Jesus' rich, atoning blood . . .⁴

III

The early years of the Movement, says Julian, produced many hymn-writers who put forth a great number of hymns, some of which are very beautiful, and all of which . . . helped either to form or to strengthen the Society.

Though not united with the Brethren, Thomas Kelly (1769-1854)⁵ had a similar history and adopted similar principles. Open Brethren books contain many of his hymns, and a number are in LF.

¹ P. 473. ² LF 1932. Also LF 1881, 1903; BH, HCW, L & L, LHB, TR; Presbyterian Church hymnary (1898), Young.

³ HCW. Also BH. See also the long section in HCW on "Joy and peace in believing".

⁴ BH. Also HCW.

⁵ Author of *The Head that once was crowned with thorns* and many other well-known lines. See, e.g., Beattie, *Stories*, or Julian, s.v. "Kelly" (Julian also wrongly includes him, though with a query, among "Plymouth Brethren" hymn-writers).

One of the earliest "true" Brethren writers was Margaret, Lady Cockburn-Campbell (1808-41), daughter of General Sir John Malcolm. Most of her work appeared in J. G. Deck's *Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs* (1842), and some are still in use. Her *Praise ye Jehovah, praise the Lord most holy* appears in Young and in the Presbyterian Church hymnary (1898 and 1927 eds.).

A better-known writer was Robert Cleaver Chapman (1803-1902). His hymns

are like himself: sweet, spiritual, and gracious; it is simply because they have been overlooked that they have failed to obtain a world-wide circulation.¹

His 162 hymns and poems are contained in *Hymns and meditations* (1871). At the funeral of the founder of the Bristol Orphanage, the following hymn by Müller's life-long friend was sung:

I rest in Christ, the Son of God,
Who took the servant's form;
By faith I flee to Jesus' cross,
My covert from the storm . . .²

"Few adoration hymns", says Beattie,³ "have been penned with more thoughtful care" than:

O my Saviour, crucified,
Near Thy cross would I abide,
There to look with steadfast eye
On Thy dying agony . . .
Dwelling on Mount Calvary,
Contrite shall my spirit be;
Rest and holiness shall find,
Fashioned like my Saviour's mind.⁴

Another popular hymn is:

King of glory, set on high,
Girt with strength and majesty,
We Thy holy Name confess,
Thee with adoration bless . . .⁵

My soul, amid this stormy world describes the Christian's longing for heaven:

¹ Short, p. 100. Frank Holmes's otherwise excellent biography of Chapman, *Brother indeed* (1956), barely mentions his hymns. ² Quoted in Müller pp. 708-9. Also HCW, L & L.

³ *Stories*, p. 86.

⁴ HCW. Also L & L, LHB; LF 1881 (Appendix). BH uses the plural throughout, e.g., "O our Saviour . . ."

⁵ LF 1951. Also LF 1881, 1903, 1932.

... The cords that bound my heart to earth
 Are loosed by Jesus' hand;
 Before His Cross I now am left
 A stranger in the land . . .¹

The compositions of James George Deck (1807?-84) are, according to Julian,

marked by directness of aim, simplicity of language, and great earnestness. The rhythm is good, and an expressive tenderness pervades many of them.²

A few have already been mentioned.³ Here is the first stanza of another:

○ Lamb of God ! still keep me
 Near to Thy wounded side ;
 'Tis only there in safety
 And peace I can abide.
 What foes and snares surround me !
 What lusts and fears within !
 The grace that sought and found me
 Alone can keep me clean . . .⁴

Deck's sister, Mrs. Mary Jane Walker (1816-78), the author of many hymns including *Jesus I will trust Thee, / Trust Thee with my soul !* "joined the Brethren" late in life.

George Vicesimus Wigram (1805-79) is better known as the compiler of two early hymn-books⁵ than as a contributor to them. The following example of his work appeared in LF 1856. It speaks of the Father's work in redemption:

What raised the wondrous thought,
 Or who did it suggest,
 That we, the church, to glory brought,
 Should with the Son be blest? . . .

¹ BH. Also HCW, LHB, TR. See above for *The Dove that once on Jesus sat* and *No bone of Thee was broken*.

² Article on Deck. Julian gives 1802 as the birth-date; but Beattie (Stories), Noel, and Pickering each give 1807.

³ O Lord, Thy love's unbounded ! Around Thy grave, Lord Jesus, We bless our Saviour's Name, "A little while !"—the Lord shall come, Lord Jesus, are we one with Thee ? When first, o'erwhelmed with sin and shame.

⁴ BH. Also HCW ; *Golden bells*, Presbyterian Church hymnary (1898 and 1927 eds.), Young. L & L and LF 1881, 1903, 1932, 1951 have rewritten it in the plural throughout, i.e., "O Lamb of God ; still keep us . . ." Young includes seven of Deck's hymns. Nine are found, with a few other Brethren hymns, in Bishop J. C. Ryle's *Hymns for the Church on earth* (7th ed. [c. 1890]).

⁵ *Hymns for the poor of the flock* (1838) and LF 1856.

It closes with a tribute to the Holy Spirit: ¹

Sealed with the Holy Ghost,
We triumph in that love;
Thy wondrous thought has made our boast,
Glory with Christ above! ²

No hymn of his appears in BH, and HCW has only the one quoted. A few are included in LF, e.g., one in an unusual metre:

How bright, there above, is the mercy of God!
And void of all guilt, and clear of all sin,
Are my conscience and heart, through my Saviour's blood:
Not a cloud above—not a spot within.
Christ died! then I'm clean: not a spot within.
God's mercy and love! not a cloud above.
'Tis the Spirit, through faith, thus triumphs o'er sin: ³
Not a cloud above—not a spot within. ⁴

Dr. Samuel Prideaux Tregelles (1813-75), the eminent Biblical textual critic, was in fellowship with the early Brethren. He was a greater scholar than hymn-writer; ⁵ but a few of his hymns are justly popular. ⁶ The following appeared in J. G. Deck's *Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs* (1842):

'Tis sweet to think of those at rest,
Who sleep in Christ the Lord,
Whose spirits now with Him are blest,
According to His word . . . ⁷

These words comforted the mourners at George Müller's funeral. ⁸ Another hymn appeared as early as 1838.

Holy Saviour! we adore Thee,
Seated on the throne of God;
While the heavenly hosts before Thee
Gladly sing Thy praise aloud,
Thou art worthy!
We are ransomed by Thy blood . . . ⁹

¹ See above p. 214, for the alleged neglect of this theme.

² LF 1951. Also LF 1881, 1903, 1932; HCW. L & L omits the final stanza.

³ Cf. footnote 1 above.

⁴ LF 1951. Also LF 1881, 1903, 1932. The second stanza illustrates the "perfectionism" mentioned on p. 213 above; note the distinction that Exclusives make between "standing" and "state".

⁵ See, e.g., G. H. Fromow's article in this *QUARTERLY*, vol. 22 (1950), pp. 290-5.

⁶ E.g., *Lord Jesus, we believing* (quoted above).

⁷ LF 1951. Also LF 1881, 1903, 1932; HCW, L & L.

⁸ Müller, p. 708.

⁹ BH. Also HCW, L & L; LF 1881, 1903.

Here is a song of praise to the Father:

Father, we Thy children bless Thee
 For Thy love on us bestowed;
 Source of blessing, we confess Thee
 Now our Father and our God.
 Wondrous was Thy love in giving
 Jesus for our sins to die;
 Wondrous was His grace in leaving,
 For our sakes, the heav'n's on high . . .¹

Another hymn treats a similar theme:

Thy Name we bless, Lord Jesus,
 That Name all names excelling,
 How great Thy love, all praise above,
 Should every tongue be telling.
 The Father's loving-kindness
 In giving Thee was shewn us;
 Now by Thy blood redeemed to God,
 As children He doth own us . . .²

Neatby often attacks John Nelson Darby (1800-82) and yet concludes:³

Darby's mind is perhaps most simply and efficiently studied through his hymns. . . . I am even reluctant to give extracts, for Darby's hymns must be studied as a whole.⁴ But has the effect of the Incarnation often been more nobly conceived than in the following stanza?

"God and Father, we adore Thee
 For the Christ, Thine image bright,
 In whom all *Thy holy nature*
Dawned on our once hopeless night."⁵

. . . How many hymns on heaven have reached the height of the concluding stanza of his "Rest of the saints above"?

"God and the Lamb shall there
 The light and temple be,
And radiant hosts for ever share
The unveiled mystery."⁶

¹ LF 1932. Also LF 1881, 1903; BH, HCW, L & L.

² LF 1903. Also BH, HCW, L & L, TR; LF 1881 and (only eight lines) LF 1932.

³ Pp. 333-334. Neatby's italics throughout.

⁴ [True of most hymns, this fact should be borne in mind throughout this article.]

⁵ [In LF 1951 these words act as the first stanza of a hymn by E. H. Chater. In the *Presbyterian Church hymnary* (1927) they appear as the first stanza of another hymn by Hugh Falconer.]

⁶ [Like many of his best hymns, written at a time of unrest within the Movement. Also in Darby; Turner, pp. 72-73; LF 1881, 1903, 1932, 1951; HCW, L & L. The "rest of God" is a favourite theme of his. See e.g., *There is rest for the weary soul* (Darby; LF 1951; in LF 1932 it begins with the second stanza, *There is rest in the tender love*).]

He composed one of his earliest hymns about 1835 while bedridden through gout in the eye :

... Hark ! Ten thousand voices, crying
 "Lamb of God" with one accord :
 Thousand thousand saints replying,
 Bursts, at once, the echoing chord ! ...
 Joyful now the wide creation
 Rests, in undisturbed repose ;
 Blest in Jesus' full salvation,
 Sorrow now, nor thralldom knows ! ...¹

In 1837 he wrote the following lines in Switzerland:

Rise, my soul ! Thy God directs thee ;
 Stranger hands no more impede :
 Pass thou on ! His hand protects thee,
 Strength that has the captive freed.
 Is the wilderness before thee,
 Desert lands, where drought abides ?
 Heavenly springs shall there restore thee,
 Fresh from God's exhaustless tides ...²

Geoffrey T. Bull, the Brethren missionary released in 1953 after over three years' captivity in China, found solace in the above words.³

Russell Elliott pays this tribute:

no hymns ever written have proved a greater aid to worship or touched a loftier note; especially those addressed to the Father. They are more calculated than any other compositions we know to inspire the highest communion with the Father and the Son.⁴

A less partial critic writes:

Of all the hymns of the Brethren—and no one can deny the exceptional beauty of very many of them—Darby's are unequalled ... for depth, force and grandeur; though Darby put himself at a serious disadvantage (especially in comparison with so exquisitely graceful a writer as Sir Edward Denny) by his involved and uncouth style of composition.⁵

¹ Darby: "Oh! the *joy* of the salvation" [my italics—in all but three of the fifteen hymns by Darby in the 1928 revision of LF the word "joy" occurs from one to four times (Noel, vol. 1, p. 53)]. In LF 1881, 1903, 1932, 1951; BH, HCW, L & L, the first stanza is *Hark! Ten thousand voices* ...

² Darby. Also Turner, pp. 24-25; Lang, *Groves*, pp. 342-3; LF 1881, 1903, 1932, 1951; BH, HCW, L & L, TR.

³ *When iron gates yield* (1955), pp. 152 and 254.

⁴ Quoted by Noel, vol. 1, p. 52.

⁵ Neatby, pp. 194-195. Cf. also Turner, pp. 71-75. See above for Darby's *O Lord, Thy love's unbounded*; and *This world is a wilderness wide*.

Sir Edward Denny (1796-1889) wrote much on the Second Advent;¹ but he also wrote on the First Coming, e.g., the lines:

A pilgrim through this lonely world
The blessed Saviour passed;
A mourner all His life was He,
A dying Lamb at last . . .²

What grace, O Lord, and beauty shone offers us Christ's life as an example to follow:

. . . One with Thyself, may every eye
In us, Thy brethren, see
That gentleness and grace that spring
From union, Lord, with Thee!³

Pathos and meditation characterize much of his work, e.g.,

O grace divine! the Saviour shed
His life-blood on th' accursed tree;
Bowed on the cross His blessed head,
And died to make His people free . . .⁴

His most-loved composition, says Beattie, is:

To Calvary, Lord, in spirit now
Our weary souls repair,
To dwell upon Thy dying love,
And taste its sweetness there.
Sweet resting-place of every heart
That feels the plague of sin,
Yet knows the deep, mysterious joy
Of peace with God within . . .⁵

Erik Routley calls Denny the Movement's most distinguished hymn-writer and points out that his *Light of the lonely pilgrim's heart* (1842) has just appeared in *Hymns ancient and modern*.⁶

Albert Midlane (1825-1909) composed many hymns in use also

¹ E.g., *Hope of our hearts, O Lord, appear!* Other hymns quoted above are *Sweeter, O Lord, than rest to Thee* and *Sweet feast of love divine!*

² HCW. Also BH, TR.

³ HCW. Also BH, L & L. Also Presbyterian Church hymnary (1898 and 1927) and Methodist hymn-book (1933).

⁴ LF 1951. Also LF 1932.

⁵ BH. Also HCW, L & L; *Redemption songs*; Young. Cf. Beattie, *Stories*.

⁶ 1950 ed. (See Routley, *Hymns and human life*, 1952, p. 164.) Also LF 1903, 1932; HCW; Presbyterian Church hymnary (1898 and 1927), Methodist hymn-book (1933), Baptist Church hymnal (1933), Young.

outside the Assemblies. *There's a Friend for little children*, written in 1859, soon attained world-wide popularity. Miller's estimate is just:

His hymns are full of spiritual thought, careful in their wording, and often very pleasing, without reaching the highest form of poetical excellence.¹

Julian underlines his "constant and happy use of Scripture phraseology". He might have quoted as an example:

"All things are ready," Come !
Come to the supper spread ;
Come, rich and poor ; come, old and young,
Come, and be richly fed . . .²

His hymns are often suitable for missions. Another example is:

The perfect righteousness of God
Is witnessed in the Saviour's blood ;
'Tis in the cross of Christ we trace
His righteousness, yet wondrous grace . . .
The sinner who believes is free,
Can say, The Saviour died for me ;
Can point to the atoning blood
And say, This made my peace with God.³

One of his best-known compositions, once erroneously attributed to Fanny Crosby, *Revive Thy work, O Lord !* appears in *Hymns ancient and modern*.⁴

John Withy (1809-82) became known outside Bristol when the Bristol collection was incorporated in HCW. The latter contains nearly forty hymns of his. An Open Brother, he is not represented in any edition of LF, and only the following marriage hymn appears in BH :

Lord Jesus, let Thy favour rest
Upon this bond of love ;
May it be bound in heaven, and blest
With blessing from above . . .
As fellow-heirs of life in Thee,
May they together dwell ;
Their mutual faith and love still be
A sweet refreshing well . . .⁵

¹ P. 572. See also Julian, and D. J. Beattie, *The romance of sacred song* (popular ed., 1935, reprinted 1954), pp. 131-134.

² LF 1951. Also LF 1881 (Appendix), 1932 ; HCW, L & L.

³ LF 1951. Also LF 1881 (Appendix), 1903, 1932 ; L & L.

⁴ All eds. from 1916 to 1950. Also in Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and other hymn-books.

⁵ Also HCW. Already mentioned are: "*Behold the Lamb of God !*", *Come, sing the hallowed story*, and *Behold Thy servants keeping*.

Mrs. Emma Frances Bevan (1827-1909), though a bishop's daughter, became associated with the Brethren. She published many fine translations from the German mystics.¹ Like many Brethren she favoured anonymity. Many of her hymns are in common use, but often without her name.² Some are more suited for private devotions than assembly worship, e.g., the lines:

Christ, the Son of God, hath sent me
Through the midnight lands ;
Mine the mighty ordination
Of the pierced Hands.³

The following enriches HCW, BH, and L & L :

'Midst the darkness, storm, and sorrow,
One bright gleam I see ;
Well I know the blessed morrow
Christ will come for me.
'Midst the light and peace and glory
Of the Father's home,
Christ for me is watching, waiting—
Waiting till I come . . .⁴

A few more recent writers may be listed. S. T. Francis (1834?-1925) wrote many hymns, ten of which Julian⁵ quotes as in the *Enlarged London hymn-book* (1873); a number are in the other Open collections. Alexander Stewart (1843-1923) is the author of *Lord Jesus Christ, we seek Thy face*.⁶ T. H. Reynolds, the compiler of LF 1903, wrote a few hymns, including *Blest God and Father, in Thy sight*.⁷ C. A. Coates (1862-1945) also wrote a few, including *No act of power could e'er atone*.⁷ A. E. Myles con-

¹ E.g., a number from Gerhard Tersteegen and the already quoted *Sinners Jesus will receive*. See also Lang, *Groves*, pp. 68 and 133-134.

² Beattie says that she used the initials of the houses where the hymns were written (*Stories*)! See also Julian.

³ Quoted by Neatby, p. 334; Noel, vol. 1, p. 93; Short, p. 101. The lines come from a poem, *The Gospel according to Paul*, in Mrs. Bevan's *Hymns from Ter Steegen, Suso, and others*, Series 1 (1895, reprinted 1920), p. 142, and apply primarily to Paul's experience. [Some stanzas, including the one quoted, appear as Hymn 223 in *Songs of victory: a collection of hymns and solos for evangelistic meetings, Christian worship, conferences and the home* . . . compiled by A. W. Bell (Glasgow and London, n.d.)—Ed.]

⁴ [Translated from Tersteegen.—Ed.] Beattie prefers *Sankey's* tune to the martial one in BH.

⁵ Appendix II, which gives birth-date as 1835; but cf. Pickering and Beattie (*Stories*). *Golden bells* (*Supplement*) includes his *I am waiting for the dawning*. Young includes four other hymns.

⁶ BH, HCW, L & L. Also *Golden bells*; *Redemption songs*. See Pickering and Beattie (*Stories*).

⁷ LF 1903, 1932, 1951.

tributes two or three items to his LF 1951, including *Art thou lonely, heavy laden?*¹ E. L. Bevir contributes, *inter alia*, *Where glory lights the courts on high*.² Miss A. Ross, who died aged about nineteen, wrote *Lord, Thou art with me !/Whom shall I fear?*³ Among the translations in LF 1951 from French, German, Spanish and Swedish are these lines written by a Russian, D. Otsing, a few hours before his martyrdom:

O Lord, with our ears and hearts open,
Awaiting Thy shout would we be:
The summons that calls us to heaven,
For ever to be, Lord, with Thee . . .

IV

Brethren reading this paper will miss many of their favourite songs of praise; space allows the mention of only a few writers. Moreover, like all Christians, Brethren delight also in songs that are the common property of the Church. Other readers should not judge hymns by the same standards as secular writing: few hymns are great poems.⁴ Good or bad, hymns endear themselves by their very familiarity. This becomes evident whenever a hymn-book in common use is revised.⁵ Hymns, in fact, live not in collections (still less in the excerpts here presented), but in the hearts of congregations. Yet it is hoped that this paper has shown that the Brethren's hymnology has been unjustly neglected by their fellow-Christians.*

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¹ Also LF 1932. ² LF 1932, 1951 ³ LF 1951.

⁴ Darby, while allowing a hymn something of "the spirit of poetry", rejects poetry itself as "merely the spirit and imagination of man" (preface to LF 1881) !

⁵ The fact, however, that some Assemblies use an earlier rather than a later version of LF is due less to familiarity than to deep doctrinal questions, notably that of the "eternal Sonship" of Christ.

* Though indebted to several Brethren of both parties for help, mainly through the kind loan of books, I am solely responsible for any opinions expressed or errors committed.

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A (ii)

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B

Hymnbooks (see Julian for earlier ones)

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